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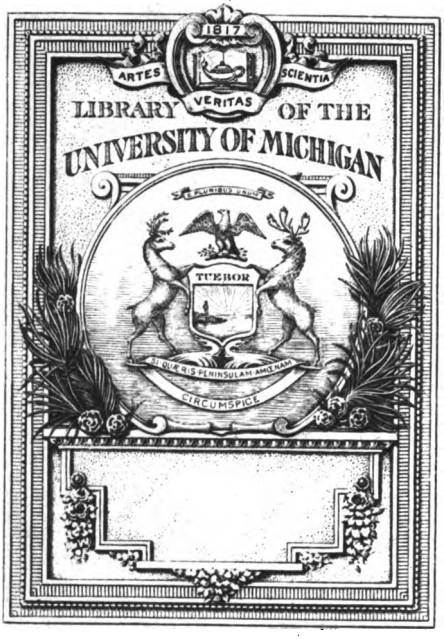
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THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

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THE BORZOI
SPANISH TRANSLATIONS

I THE CABIN [LA BARRACA]
By V. Blasco Ibáñez

II THE CITY OF THE DISCREET
By Pío Baroja

III MARTIN RIVAS
By Alberto Blest-Gana

IV THE THREE-CORNERED HAT
By Pedro A. de Alarcón

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THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

BY

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

By JACOB S. FASSETT, Jr.

NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
1918

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

PEDRO ANTONIO DE ALARCON was the fourth of ten children. Born on the tenth day of March, 1833, in the picturesque little city of Guadix, in the province of Granada, Spain, he came of a noble and ancient family whose considerable fortune had disappeared in the Napoleonic wars and the subsequent political disorders.

He studied philosophy at the Guadix Seminary under a secularized Franciscan monk, and took his degree as a Bachelor in that subject when he was but fourteen years of age. In Granada he took up the study of law, but the inability of his parents to furnish him with the necessary funds soon forced him to return to his native city, where at his father's request, he embarked upon the study of theology.

Poor as he was, he managed somehow to collect a considerable library which embraced books in

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French and Italian as well as in Latin and Spanish. French and Italian being absolutely unknown tongues to him, he forthwith set about their acquisition by a rather unusual method. Among his possessions were two copies of *Jerusalem Delivered,* one of which was in French, the other in his own tongue. By dint of infinite patience and a good deal of hard work, he succeeded in acquiring at least a reading knowledge of French in an incredibly short time. He taught himself Italian by the same method.

As his reading progressed, his love for literature grew, and his taste for theological studies decreased. He determined to become a writer; and therefore, as the first and most necessary step in that direction, he decided to go to Madrid. His parents did not look with favour upon his literary ambitions, as they felt that he should continue in the more lucrative career that the church offered. However he had made up his mind, and he cast about him for means to accomplish his purpose.

Finally, through a young novelist of his acquaintance, Torcuato Tarrago, who lived in

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Guadix, he became acquainted with a "cultivated personage" of Cádiz. The trio founded a weekly paper called *El Eco de Occidente,* devoted to literature, science, and art, and published in Cádiz. Fortunately the enterprise proved successful, and in three years young Alarcón had saved what he considered sufficient to warrant his departure for Madrid.

He left his home on January 18, 1853, and reached the Court without friends or letters of introduction, but with an ample supply of money, and an abundance of verses with which he purposed to astonish the world. One of his poems was a long and pretentious conclusion to Espronceda's unfinished *El diablo mundo.* After weary weeks of waiting upon the publishers, during which his supply of money became nearly exhausted, he lost faith in his verses and burned them all. In the depths of despair, he returned to his home where he was welcomed with the usual tears of joy and forgiveness. The prodigal had meanwhile been drafted for the army, but his parents managed to purchase his release.

He soon went to Granada, where he continued

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to interest himself in the publication of *El Eco de Occidente*. He became a member of a literary society which was called *La Cuerda*, and began to take a lively interest in the tumultuous politics of the day. After taking a personal part in the successful rebellion headed by Cicálvaro, he founded *La Rendención*, a paper in which he hurled vigorous polemics against the clergy, the army, and the national militia.

That same year he returned to Madrid, where his fearlessness and hot-headedness as a writer earned him a considerable, if somewhat questionable reputation. He was offered the directorship of a scurrilous sheet called *El Látigo* whose sole policy was to attack the Queen. His connection therewith soon culminated in a duel from which he came out alive thanks only to the kindness and generosity of his adversary, the poet José Heriberto García Quevedo.

This adventure seemed to sober the boy — he was only twenty-one at the time — and he retired to Segovia to recover his health and spirits. While there he decided to try his hand at something a little more dignified than political po-

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lemics, and wrote *El final de Norma,* his first novel. From that time until 1857 his writings appeared frequently in nearly every periodical of note in Spain. It was not long before he had created a considerable reputation for himself in the domain of letters.

In 1857, *El hijo pródigo,* his first and only play, was produced at Madrid in the *Teatro del Circo,* attaining riotous success on its first night in spite of a rather hostile audience. The newspapers, however, which were nearly all inimical upon account of his former activities, attacked it so bitterly that he removed it from the boards in disgust; nor would he ever afterward consent to its performance.

That same year, true to the warlike traditions of Spain's greatest literary figures, he put down his pen, enlisted in the army, and went to Africa under General O'Donnell. He brought back from the war "a wound, two crosses, and a book," as one biographer puts it. The book was his *Diario de un testigo de la guerra de Africa,* of which fifty thousand copies were sold in a fortnight. With the proceeds he made a journey

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to Naples, upon his return, completing a book of travel — *De Madrid á Nápoles.*

After 1863, his father having died, he turned again to politics. He wrote for *La Epoca,* and was one of the founders of *La Politica,* a periodical devoted to the interests of the Liberal party. During this period, he was *diputado* from Guadix several times. His marriage in Granada to Doña Paulina Contrera y Reyes in 1866 seemed to modify his political views considerably, for in that year he signed the celebrated protest of the Unionists and was sent into exile at Paris. From Paris he went to Granada where he wrote an epic poem entitled *Suspiro del moro,* for which he received the Liceo Gold Medal in 1867. The following year he supported the candidacy to the throne of the Duke of Montpensier. He remained neutral during the short-lived Republic, but when the Monarchy was restored in 1874, the ardent Republican of *El Látigo* finally became a dignified Conservative!

In 1873 began a period of literary activity which lasted, with a few interruptions of a political nature, until the years immediately preceding

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his death. Among the products of his pen at this time were *La Alpujarra, El sombrero de tres picos, El escándalo, El niño de la bola, La pródiga,* and *El Capitán Veneno.* He was appointed Councillor of State in 1875, and in the same year received the Grand Cross of Isabella the Catholic in recognition of his book on the African war and his services in that campaign. On December 15, 1875, he was elected to the Spanish Academy. He died in Madrid on the 19th of July, 1891, after an illness of prolonged duration.

Of his personality, Mariano Catalina, one of his biographers, speaks as follows:

"Alarcón is of a bright and jovial disposition, simple in manner, and yet most delightful in his conversation: he is loyal and affectionate to his friends, considering the real ones as members of his own family; and his house, where he is accustomed to bring them together frequently, is one of the few in which the time passes without sense of its flight. His vigorous intelligence, and his keen and ready wit, are now in their apogee; he has besides experience and the tranquillity of spirit that heretofore he has on oc-

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casion lacked, and we are not hazarding a great deal by asserting boldly that great and deserving as Alarcón's literary reputation has been in the past, his future holds for him one still greater and more solid."

The last years of his life were largely devoted to collecting and revising his works, which were later published in nineteen volumes. Three volumes contain short stories, called *Novelas Cortas;* there are four long novels, *El escándalo, La pródiga, El final de Norma,* and *El niño de la bola;* two short novels, *El Capitán Veneno* (which contains his *Historia de mis libros*), and *El sombrero de tres picos;* one volume of genre sketches, *Cosas que fueron;* three of travels, *Viajes por España* (1 vol.) and *De Madrid á Nápoles* (2 vols.); a historic-geographical study, *La Alpujarra;* a book of essays, *Juicios literarios;* one of verse; and the *Diario de un testigo de la guerra de Africa* in three volumes.

Of this list, only two are at all well known in this country: *El Capitán Veneno,* and *El sombrero de tres picos,* both of which have been edited for schoolroom use. These, with the

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Diario de un testigo de la guerra de Africa are considered his best productions.

But it is *El sombrero de tres picos* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*) that is here of chief concern. This story is considered to be his masterpiece, and will doubtless live long after his other works are forgotten. It has been translated into several languages, but is now for the first time introduced to the English-reading public. It has been dramatized and used as the basis of four comic operas in as many different tongues. One cannot read the story without remarking upon its perfect adaptability to the stage. It was written in 1874 and appeared first serially in the *Revista Europea*. It was printed and published in book form very soon after its appearance as a serial, and was received with immediate popularity.

I cannot do better here than quote from the excellent introduction by Professor Benjamin P. Bourland, which he has prefixed to his edition of the Spanish text.[1]

"The success of the story was immediate and

[1] Henry Holt & Co., N. Y. 1907.

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deserved. The pseudo-modest praise, 'the least bad of my books,' applied by Alarcón to *El Escándalo,* might be transferred and made positive here. The skill of construction, the exact sense of propriety that preserves every decency while yielding no shred of the interest, the really admirable dialogue, and the beautifully Spanish atmosphere of it all, make us wish that the author's judgment had led him oftener into these ways, where alone his desire fails to outrun his performance. . . . It is worthy of the rank it holds among the longer short stories of literature, a strong, objective piece of work, without shade of self-consciousness; a fine story, in short, admirably told. Aside from its purely æsthetic value, the book is a precious document to the student of the history of manners and customs in Spain, both in its lines and in the much that is to be read between them."

There has been much discussion about the origin of the tale. I think we may accept Alarcón's own statement as to where *he* got it.[1] Undoubtedly the plot in one form or another is con-

[1] See the Author's Preface.

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siderably older than its appearance in Spain in the ballad form. It has been traced to the *Decameron* as its source; others assert that Boccaccio was by no means its inventor. But it is useless to pursue the subject further. We are chiefly concerned with the form which the genius of Alarcón gave to his material.

"For a long time we have been accustomed to recognize in the novels of Alarcón his faculty of invention, his wit, and a subtle and enchanting spirit, French in origin and tradition, which he expressed with rare dexterity and ease. Now he has seen fit to reveal himself to us as a skilful painter of splendid quality, a most faithful and capable exponent of the best traditions of the Spanish school, as one accustomed to dip the pen of Quevedo into the palette of Goya.

"And it is the canvases of Goya, more than anything else, that this little picture of manners, this *genre* picture, as it is called nowadays, entitled *El sombrero de tres picos,* most resembles. One sees in it the freshness and vigour of colouring of the creator of *Los caprichos,* his mischievous and easy-going types, his strong ac-

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centuations of light and shade, and his admirable lightness of touch . . ."

This from the able pen of Luis Alfonso in his foreword to *El sombrero de tres picos*. Alfonso adds that with this work, Alarcón restored to Spain "the numerous riches of the old and glorious literature of the country," and concludes by urging the public to read the story, for then "you will feel yourselves only a little less grateful to me than to the novelist who has so captivated and delighted your spirits."

J. S. F., Jr.

Cambridge, Mass.,
January, 1918

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THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

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THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

I

CONCERNING THE DATE OF THE OCCURRENCE

IT was toward the beginning of the long century which is now drawing to a close. We do not know the exact year: we can only be certain that it was after 1804, and before 1808.

Don Carlos IV still reigned in Spain — *by the grace of God,* according to the coins, and by the forgetfulness or especial grace of Bonaparte, according to the French bulletins. The other European sovereigns who were descendants of Luis XIV had already lost their crowns (and the chief of them his head) in the violent storm that had been raging in this ancient part of the world since 1789.

Nor did the peculiarity that characterized our fatherland in those times stop here. The Soldier

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of the Revolution, the son of an obscure Corsican lawyer, the conqueror of Rivoli, of the Pyramids, of Marengo and of a hundred other battles, had just donned the crown of Charlemagne and completely transfigured Europe; creating and abolishing nations, wiping out frontiers, inventing dynasties and changing the shape, the name, the situation, the customs and even the dress of the villages through which he rode on his charger like an animated earthquake, or like the "Antichrist," as the powers of the North called him. . . . Nevertheless, our fathers (God rest their souls), far from hating or fearing him, amused themselves by extolling his extraordinary deeds, as if they had reference to a hero in a book of chivalry, or to things that take place on another planet — never in their wildest dreams fearing that he might some day take it into his head to come here and attempt the atrocities he had perpetrated in France, Italy, Germany and other countries. Once a week (or twice at the most) the Madrid post arrived at most of the important settlements of the Peninsula, bringing some number of the *Gaceta* (which was no more regu-

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lar than the post in its habits); and through it the principal personages learned (if, by chance, the *Gaceta* gave details) whether there existed a state more or less beyond the Pyrenees; whether there had been another battle in which six or eight kings and emperors had taken part; and whether Napoleon was in Milan, Brussels, or Warsaw. . . . For the rest, our forefathers went on living the old-fashioned Spanish life, very leisurely, clinging to their antiquated customs; in the peace and grace of God; with their Inquisition and their friars; with their picturesque legal inequality; with their privileges, rights, and personal exemptions; with their lack of municipal or political freedom; governed simultaneously by distinguished bishops and powerful corregidors (whose respective powers were not easily disentangled, since each was concerned with things temporal and eternal); and paying tithes, first-fruits, excises, war taxes, legacies and forced alms, rents — big and little — poll taxes, royal thirds, duties, income taxes, and about fifty other tributes whose nomenclature does not come to mind at present.

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And here endeth all that the present story has to do with the military and political affairs of that epoch; since our only object in referring to what was happening then in the world was to get at the fact that in the year which concerns us (let us say 1805) the old régime still held sway in Spain in all circles of public and private life — as if, in the midst of so many innovations and upsets, the Pyrenees had been converted into another Wall of China.

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II

HOW PEOPLE LIVED IN THOSE DAYS

IN Andalusia, for example (and it was in an Andalusian city that what you are about to hear took place), persons of distinction were still in the habit of rising very early in the morning; going to the Cathedral for early mass, even if it were not a day of holy obligation; breakfasting at nine o'clock upon a fried egg, a cup of chocolate, and fried bread; dining at two o'clock in the afternoon upon a stew and an entrée if there was any game, and, if there was none, upon stew alone; taking a siesta after eating; strolling in the country after that; counting their rosaries at twilight in their respective parish-churches; taking another cup of chocolate after early candle-light prayer (this time with biscuits); attending (if they were very presumptuous) the coterie of the corregidor, or of the

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dean, or of the titled personage who resided in the village; withdrawing to their own homes at the tolling of the bell for seven o'clock prayers; closing the outer door before curfew; supping upon salad and fricassee if there were no fresh anchovies; and retiring forthwith with their wives (those who had them), not without first having heated the bed — at least during nine months of the year. . . .

Happiest of days, those in which our country continued in quiet and peaceful possession of all the cobwebs, all the dust, all the mustiness, all the respects, all the beliefs, all the traditions, all the uses and all the abuses that had been sanctified by centuries! Happiest of days, those in which there was a variety of classes, of affections, and of customs in human society! Happiest of days, I say — especially for the poets, who found a curtain-raiser, a postlude, a comedy, a drama, a religious play, or an epic around every corner, instead of the prosaic uniformity and tasteless realism that came to us at the end of the French Revolution! Happiest of days indeed! . . .

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But this is retracing our steps. Enough of generalities and circumlocutions; let us enter resolutely upon the story of the *Three-Cornered Hat.*

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III

GIVE AND TAKE

WELL, at that time, near the city of ——, there was a famous grist mill (which no longer exists), situated about a quarter of a league from the city, between the foot of a gentle slope covered with mazard and cherry trees, and a very fertile meadow which served as a margin (and sometimes as a bed) for the intermittent and treacherous excuse for a river.

For many and diverse reasons that mill had been for some time the favourite point of arrival and repose for the most distinguished promenaders of the aforesaid city — Firstly, it was approached by a wagon road which was less impassable than the others in the vicinity. In the second place, in front of the mill there was a small, paved courtyard covered by an enormous

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grape arbour beneath which it was pleasant to enjoy the shade in the summer, and the sun in the winter — thanks to the alternate coming and going of the grape leaves. In the third place, the miller was very respectful, very discreet, and very courteous; a man who possessed what is called the gift of getting on with people, and who used to entertain the distinguished gentlemen who honoured him with their vespertine assemblage, by offering them — whatever happened to be in season: string beans, cherries and mazard berries, lettuce, on the stalk and unseasoned (which is very good when accompanied by macaroons — macaroons which their worships took it upon themselves to send on ahead), melons, grapes from the very arbour that served them as a canopy, popcorn, if it were winter, and roasted chestnuts, and almonds, and walnuts, and now and then on very cold afternoons, a draught of home-made wine (inside the house by the heat of the fire), to which on feast days it was the custom to add fritters, cream-cakes, doughnuts, or a slice of Alpujarras ham.

"Was the miller so rich, or were the members

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of the coterie so inconsiderate?" you will interrupt me by exclaiming.

Neither the one thing nor the other. The miller only made one living, and those gentlemen were delicacy and pride personified. But at a time when one paid fifty-odd different contributions to the Church and to the State, a countryman of his clearness of perception risked very little in gaining the good will of town councillors, canons, friars, clerks, and other personages. Thus it is that there were many who declared that Tío Lucas (for such was the miller's name) saved a large amount of money annually by entertaining everybody so lavishly.

"Your Honour will give me an old door from the house you tore down," he would say to one.— "Your Worship," he would say to another, "will order them to reduce my war-tax, or my excise-tax, or my income-tax."— "Your Reverence will let me pick a few leaves in the convent garden for my silk-worms."— "Your Lordship will give me permission to haul a little firewood from Mount X."— "Your Reverence will write a couple of lines so they will let me cut some

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wood from H——'s pine grove."— "Your Worship must write me a little something that won't cost me anything."— "I cannot pay the poll-tax this year."— "I hope the lawsuit will be decided in my favour."— "I struck a man to-day, and I think he ought to go to jail for having provoked me."— "Has Your Worship enough of such and such a thing to spare?"— "Is that other thing of any use to you?"— "Can you lend me your mule?"— "Will your cart be busy tomorrow?"— "Do you think I might send for your donkey?"—

And these songs were repeated continually — always obtaining the generous and disinterested answer of —"*As you wish.*"

So now you see that Tío Lucas was not exactly on the road to ruin.

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IV

A WOMAN VIEWED FROM WITHOUT

THE final and perhaps most powerful reason the aristocracy of the city had for frequenting Tío Lucas' mill in the afternoons, was that both the clergy and the laymen, beginning with the Señor Bishop and the Señor Corregidor, were able there to contemplate at their leisure one of the most lovely, most gracious, and most admirable creations to ever come from the hands of God, who in those days was called the *Supreme Being* by Jovellanos and all the gallicized school of our country. . . .

This creation was called "Señá Frasquita." [1]

I shall begin by informing you that Señá Frasquita, the legitimate spouse of Tío Lucas, was a woman of supreme virtue, and that all the illustrious visitors at the mill were aware of this. I

[1] Señá is a little less formal than Señora, of which it is a corruption.

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venture further: not one of them gave evidence of looking upon her with lustful eyes, or with any sinful mental reservations. They admired her, yes; and paid court to her (before her husband, of course) — friars as well as laymen, canons as well as magistrates — as a prodigy of beauty who did honour to her Creator; and as a roguish and coquettish minx who innocently gave pleasure to the most melancholy of souls.—"She is a *beautiful animal,*" the most virtuous Prelate was wont to say.—"She is a statue of Greek antiquity," observed a very erudite lawyer who was a corresponding member of the Academy of History.—"She is the very archetype of Eve," pronounced the Prior of the Franciscans.—"She is a splendid woman," exclaimed a Colonel of the militia.—"She is a serpent, a siren, a she-devil!" added the Corregidor.—"But, she is a good woman, an angel, a dear, a four-year-old child," they all ended by remarking on their return from the mill, stuffed with grapes and nuts, in search of their own gloomy and commonplace firesides.

The four-year-old girl — that is, Señá Frasquita, was probably nearing her thirties. She

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was more than two ells tall, and stout in proportion — or perhaps a little heavier than was proper for her proud height. Although she had never had any children, she was like a colossal Niobe: she resembled a (female) Hercules: she looked like a Roman matron of the type that is found in Trastevere. . . . But the most notable thing about her was the mobility, the nimbleness, the animation, the grace of her imposing stature. She lacked the monumental repose essential in a statue such as the academician insisted she was. She could bend like a reed, whirl like a weather-vane, and dance like a top. Her face was still more mobile than her body, and therefore less sculptural. As many as five dimples enlivened it charmingly: two were in one cheek, one in the other, another, a very small one, near the left commisure of her smiling lips, and the last, a very large one, in the middle of her round chin. Add to this the roguish gestures, the gracious winks, and the different postures of her head that adorned her conversation, and you will form an idea of that face, so full of wit and beauty, and ever-radiant with health and good spirits.

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Neither Señá Frasquita nor Tío Lucas was an Andalusian: she was a Navarrese, and he a Murcian. He had come to the city of —— when he was fifteen years old as a half page, half servant to the bishop who was the immediate predecessor of the one in the present narrative. His patron had him educated for the clergy, and perhaps with this end in view, and in order to assure him the proper income, left him the mill as a legacy. But Tío Lucas, who at the time of His Lordship's death had only taken minor orders, hung up his vestments then and there, and enlisted as a soldier, more desirous of seeing the world and having adventures than of saying mass and grinding wheat. In 1793 he took part in the campaign of the Western Pyrenees as orderly to the valiant General Don Ventura Caro; was present at the assault on Château Pignon; and remained for a long time in the northern provinces where he obtained his discharge. He met Señá Frasquita in Estella when she was called simply *Frasquita;* fell in love with her; married her, and brought her to Andalusia in search of the mill where they were to live peacefully and happily throughout

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the rest of their peregrination through this vale of tears and laughter.

Translated from Navarre to that solitude, Señá Frasquita, not having acquired a single Andalusian custom, was very different from the countrywomen in her vicinity. She dressed with more simplicity, more freedom, and more dignity than they; bathed more frequently; and permitted the sun and air to caress her bare arms and uncovered throat.

Up to a certain point, she dressed as the ladies of that period dressed; as Goya's women did; or Queen María Luisa. Her skirt was rather narrow — though not enough so to hamper her movements — and extremely short; disclosing her tiny feet and the curve of her superb leg. Her neck was cut round and low — after the style in Madrid, where she stayed with her Lucas for two months on her way from Navarre to Andalusia. Her hair was caught up at the top of her crown, bringing the grace of her head and neck into pleasing prominence. An ear-ring hung from each diminutive ear, and there were many rings upon the shapely fingers of her rough but

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clean hands." Lastly: Señá Frasquita's voice embraced all the tones of the largest and most melodious of instruments; and her laugh was so gay and silvery that it was like a peal of bells on Holy Saturday.

Now let us picture Tío Lucas.

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V

A MAN VIEWED FROM WITHOUT AND FROM WITHIN

TÍO LUCAS was uglier than sin. He had been so all his life, and he was very nearly forty. Nevertheless, God has put on earth few men as attractive and agreeable as he. Captivated by his liveliness and talent and wit, the defunct bishop had begged his parents — who were shepherds, not of souls, but of real sheep — to let him take the lad. When His Reverence died, and the lad had forsaken the seminary for the barracks, General Caro singled him out from the whole army and made him his special orderly, his veritable campaign servant. When at last his military duty was completed, it was as easy for Tío Lucas to subdue the heart of Señá Frasquita as it had been for him to captivate the esteem of the general and of the prelate. The Navarrese, who at that time had seen some

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twenty Aprils, and was the "right eye" of all the lads in Estella — some of whom were fairly rich — was unable to resist the continual jests, the witty ideas, the glances of a love-sick monkey, and the clownish and constant smile, full of mischief and sweetness too, of that Murcian who was so bold, so loquacious, so capable, so valiant, and so gracious, that he ended by upsetting the judgment not only of the envied beauty but of her father and mother as well.

Lucas was at that time, and continued to be up to the date of our story, very small of stature (at least as compared to his wife), somewhat hunch-backed, very dark, thinly bearded, large-nosed, long-eared, and pock-marked. On the other hand, his mouth was not bad, and his teeth were unsurpassed. One might say that only the man's bark was rough and ugly, and that his perfections appeared as soon as one began to get beneath the surface. These perfections commenced with his teeth. Then came his voice — vibrant, elastic, attractive; virile and solemn at times, sweet and honeyed when he asked for anything, and always difficult to resist. Next came the

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things that his voice said: most opportune, discreet, witty, persuasive. . . . And lastly, in Tío Lucas' soul were courage, loyalty, honesty, common sense, a desire to learn, and an instinctive or empirical knowledge of many things, a profound contempt for fools, whatever their social category, and a certain spirit of irony, of mockery, and of sarcasm that made him seem — at least in the Academician's eyes — like a Don Francisco de Quevedo in the rough.

Such, both within and without, was Tío Lucas.

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VI

THE COUPLE'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SEÑA FRASQUITA loved Tío Lucas madly, and considered herself the happiest woman in the world because he returned her affection. As we have already said, they had no children, and each set about taking care of and spoiling the other with an indescribable eagerness; but without their tender solicitude acquiring the disgusting and fawningly sentimental character so common in most couples who are without issue. On the contrary: they treated each other with a simplicity, a joyousness, a good-natured fellowship, and a confidence like that of two children, who as comrades in games and sports, love each other with all their hearts and never say so — nor do they themselves realize the extent of their feelings.

It does not seem possible that there could ever

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have existed on this earth a miller who was better groomed, better dressed, more pampered at table, or surrounded with more comforts than Tío Lucas! It seems impossible that any miller's wife, or any queen, for that matter, could ever have been the object of as many attentions, of as many caresses, of as many favours, as was Señá Frasquita! It also seems impossible that any mill could have contained so many necessary, useful, agreeable, diverting, and even superfluous things as that which is to serve as a theatre for nearly the entire action of the present story!

One of the things that contributed to this was the fact that Señá Frasquita, the beautiful, industrious, strong, and healthy Navarrese, knew how to, liked to, and was able to cook, sew, embroider, sweep, make candy, wash, iron, whitewash the house, polish the brass, bake, weave, knit, sing, dance, play the guitar and the castanets, play cards, and do many many other things whose enumeration would be interminable. And a thing that contributed no less to the same end, was the fact that Tío Lucas knew how to, liked to, and was able to run the mill, cultivate the field,

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hunt, fish, act as a carpenter, as a blacksmith and as a mason, assist his wife in all the little tasks about the house, read, write, sing, etc., etc. . . .

All this without mentioning his specialties, or, if you will, his accomplishments extraordinary . . .

For example: Tío Lucas adored flowers (as did his wife), and was such a consummate horticulturalist that, by means of laborious combinations, he had even succeeded in producing entirely new specimens. He was something of a natural engineer, which he had demonstrated by constructing a press, a siphon conduit, and an aqueduct which tripled the water-power for the mill. He had taught a dog how to dance, domesticated a snake, and trained a parrot to tell the time by screeching as it watched a sun-dial which the miller had drawn upon a wall; the result of which was that the bird could soon tell the hour with great precision, even on cloudy days and in the night time.

Lastly: close to the mill was a garden that produced all kinds of fruits and vegetables; a pool enclosed in a sort of kiosk made of jasmines where

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Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita bathed in the summer time; a flower garden; a hot-house or conservatory for exotic plants; a fountain of drinking water; two burras [1] upon which the couple rode to the City or to the neighbouring villages; a hen-house; a dove-cote; an aviary; a fishery; a silk-worm nursery; bee-hives whose bees fed upon the jasmines; a wine-press or pit with its appurtenant cellar — both in miniature; an oven; a loom; a forge; a carpenter shop; etc., etc.: all encompassed in a house with eight rooms, and in two-thirds of an acre of land, valued at ten thousand *reales*.[1]

[1] Burra: a female donkey.
[1] Real: about five cents.

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VII

THE FOUNDATION OF FELICITY

YES, the miller and his wife were quite mad about each other, and, in spite of his being so ugly and she so pretty, one might even have fancied that she loved him more than he loved her. I say this because Señá Frasquita used to get jealous and ask Tío Lucas for an account of himself when he was very late in returning from the City, or from the villages where he had gone for grain; while Tío Lucas beheld even with pleasure the attentions of which Señá Frasquita was the object on the part of the gentlemen who frequented the mill; he was very proud and happy that she charmed others as much as she did him: and, although in the bottom of his heart he realized that some of them envied him; that they coveted her as mere mortals, and

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would have given anything had she been a less virtuous woman; he would leave her alone for days at a time without the slightest worry, never asking her what she had done or who had been there during his absence. . . .

However, this did not arise from the fact that Tío Lucas' love was less intense than Señá Frasquita's. It arose from the fact that he had more confidence in her virtue than she had in his; it meant that he had the advantage of her in penetration, and knew to what extent he was loved, and how much his wife respected herself; it meant chiefly that Tío Lucas was a man through and through: a man like him of Shakespearean fame, of few and indivisable feelings, incapable of doubt, who believed or died, who loved or killed, who would admit of no gradations or transitions between supreme felicity and the extermination of his happiness.

He was, in short, a Murcian Othello, in alpargatas [1] and a peasant's cap — in the first act of a potential tragedy. . . .

But why these gloomy notes in such a gay in-

[1] Alpargatas: low canvas shoes with rope soles.

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terlude? Why these portentous lightning flashes in such a serene atmosphere? Why these melodramatic attitudes in a genre picture?

You shall find out immediately.

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VIII

THE MAN IN THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

IT was two o'clock on an October afternoon. The Cathedral bell was ringing for vespers — which is equivalent to saying that all the principal personages of the City had already dined.

The canons were making their way to the choir, and the laymen to their rooms for their siestas; especially those who for official reasons — that is, those in authority — had spent the entire morning at work.

It was, then, very strange that at that hour, which was so unsuitable for taking a walk, as it was still too hot, there should depart from the City, on foot, and followed by a single alguacil,[1] the illustrious Señor Corregidor of the same — whom no one either by day or by night, could con-

[1] Alguacil: a bailiff.

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fuse with any one else, not only on account of the immensity of his three-cornered hat and the gorgeousness of his scarlet cloak, but also on account of the very singular character of his grotesque bearing. . . .

There are still many persons who can speak with full authority on the matter of the scarlet cloak and the three-cornered hat. We ourselves, as well as many others who were born in a certain city in the last years of the reign of Señor Don Fernando VII, remember having seen that cloak and hat (the black hat on top and the scarlet cloak beneath) hanging on a nail in the ruined tower of the house where His Worship lived — the sole adornment of its dismantled walls. (At that time, the tower was devoted to the childish games of his grandson.) Those two antiquated garments formed a sort of spectre of Absolutism, a sort of Corregidor's shroud, a sort of retrospective caricature of his power, painted, like so many others, in charcoal and ochre by us youngsters of the Constitution of 1837 who had gathered there. They were, in short, a sort of scare-crow which in other times had been a *scare-man,* and

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upon which I am afraid of having heaped ridicule today by parading it through that historic city in carnival time on the end of a chimney-sweeper, or by using it as a ludicrous disguise for the idiot that made the common herd laugh most heartily. . . . Poor *principles of authority!* Thus hast thou been treated by us who today invoke thee so oft! . . .

As to the grotesque bearing of the Señor Corregidor, it was caused (so they say) by the fact that he was round-shouldered — still more so than Tío Lucas — in fact, he was hunchbacked, if you will have it — ; of less than medium height; weakly; in ill health; bow-legged, and with a manner of walking *sui generis* (swaying from one side to the other and from front to rear), which can only be described by the absurd statement that he seemed to be lame in both legs. On the other hand (tradition adds), his face was not bad, although rather wrinkled from the utter lack of teeth. His complexion was greenish and dark, like that of nearly all of the sons of the two Castiles. His eyes were large and black, and gleamed with anger, despotism, and sensuality.

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He had delicate and dissolute features which expressed no personal valour, but rather a sly malice capable of anything; and a certain air of self-complacency, half aristocratic, half libertine, which revealed the fact that in spite of his legs and his hump, the man must have been in his remote youth, very agreeable and acceptable to women.

Don Eugenio de Zúñiga y Ponce de León (for that was His Lordship's name) was born in Madrid of an illustrious family; at the time of our story he was going on forty-five, and had for four years been corregidor of the city with which we are concerned, where, soon after his arrival, he married the very distinguished lady of whom we shall speak later on.

Don Eugenio's stockings (the only part of his clothes except his shoes which the extreme length of his scarlet cloak permitted one to see) were white; and his shoes were black, with gold buckles. Later, when the heat of the countryside obliged him to remove his cloak, one could see that he wore a huge muslin cravat; a dove-coloured serge jacket, very much festooned with

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elegantly embroidered green twigs; short black silk breeches; an enormous tunic of the same stuff as his jacket; a rapier with a steel hilt; a staff with tassels; and an imposing pair of gloves (or hand-coverings) of straw-coloured chamois-skin, which he never put on, but held, as it were, like a sceptre.

The alguacil, who followed the Señor Corregidor at a distance of twenty paces, was called Garduña,[1] and looked exactly like his name. Thin, extremely agile, glancing ahead and behind, to the right and to the left as he marched along, with a long neck, a diminutive and repugnant face, and a pair of hands like two bundles of whips, he resembled at once a sleuth in search of criminals, the rope which was to bind them, and the instrument destined for their punishment.

The first corregidor to set his eye upon him said without further recommendations: "You shall be my personal alguacil"— and he had been that to four corregidors.

He was forty-eight years old, and wore a three-cornered hat much smaller than his master's (for

[1] The Weasel.

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we repeat that *his* was extraordinarily large), a black cloak, stockings and suit of the same colour, a staff without tassels, and a sort of spit for a sword.

This black scare-crow seemed the shadow of his elegant master.

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IX

ARRE, BURRA!

WHEREVER that personage and his appendix went, the laborers left their tasks, uncovered their heads, and bowed to the very ground, more from fear than from respect; after which they remarked to one another in a low voice:

"The Señor Corregidor is calling on Señá Frasquita early this afternoon!"

"Early — and alone!" added some, who were accustomed to see him take that walk in the company of several other persons.

"Listen, Manuel: Why do you suppose the Señor Corregidor is going to see the Navarrese alone this afternoon?" asked a village woman of her husband who was carrying her on the croup of his beast.

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And as she put the question, she tickled him by way of added emphasis.

"Don't be evil-minded, Josefa!" exclaimed the good man. "Señá Frasquita is incapable —"

"I don't say she isn't. . . . But that's not saying that the Corregidor is incapable of falling in love with her. I have heard it said that of all those who go to stuff themselves at the mill, the old Madrelene is the only one who has evil intentions. He's so crazy about women —"

"How do you know whether he is crazy about women or not?" demanded the husband in his turn.

"I don't say it for me. . . . Corregidor or no Corregidor, he'd have to be mighty careful how he told me my eyes were black!"

She who said this was homely to a superlative degree.

"Well, see here, my child; that's their business!" replied he whom they called Manuel. "I don't think Tío Lucas is a man who would consent — Tío Lucas has a lovely temper when he gets angry!"

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"But he really seems to like it!" continued Tía Josefa, wrinkling her snout.

"Tío Lucas is a virtuous man," replied the villager. "And there are certain things a virtuous man can never like."

"Well, perhaps you are right. . . . That's their business! Now, if I were Señá Frasquita —!" "*Arre, burra*[1]*!*" shouted the husband to change the subject.

And the donkey went off at a trot — which made it impossible to hear the rest of the dialogue.

[1] Get up, donkey!

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X

FROM THE ARBOUR

WHILE the farmers who saluted the Corregidor were chatting in this fashion, Señá Frasquita was carefully sprinkling and sweeping the little pavement that served as an atrium or courtyard for the mill, and was arranging a half dozen chairs beneath the widest part of the arbour upon which Tío Lucas had climbed in order to cut the best bunches of grapes. These he was arranging artistically in a basket.

"Why, yes, Frasquita," Tío Lucas was saying from the top of the arbour: "The Señor Corregidor is in love with you, and in a very indecent manner —"

"That's what I have been telling you for some time," answered the woman of the North. "But let him suffer! — Be careful, Lucas; don't fall!"

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"Don't worry: I've got a good hold. . . . Also, you are liked by Señor —"

"See here; don't give me any more of your news!" she interrupted. "I know too well who likes me and who doesn't! I only wish I knew why you don't like me as well!"

"Why, because you are so very homely!" replied Tío Lucas.

"Well, see here — homely or no homely, I'm perfectly able to climb that arbour and throw you head first to the ground!"

"Then all I would have to do would be to refuse to let you go until I had eaten you alive!"

"Yes! — And when my lovers come and see us up there, they'll say we are a couple of monkeys!"

"And they will be right: because you *are* a little monkey — and a very pretty one — and I look like a monkey with this hump —"

"Which I am very fond of."

"Then you will like the Corregidor's much better — it's bigger than mine!"

"Come, come, Señor Don Lucas — don't be so jealous!"

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"Me, jealous of that old swindler? On the contrary; I am very glad he likes you!"

"Why?"

"Because the penance lies in the sin. You'll never really love him; and meanwhile I shall be the real Corregidor of the City!"

"Listen to the conceited one! But I might succeed in loving him — Stranger things than that have happened!"

"That wouldn't worry me very much, either!"

"Why?"

"Because then you would no longer be yourself; and not being the person you were, or the person I thought you were — cursed if I would care if the devil himself got you!"

"All right; what would you do in a case like that?"

"I? Why, I don't know! Because then I would be some one else and not the man I am now; and I cannot imagine what I would think —"

"And why would you be some one else?" insisted Señá Frasquita bravely, as she stopped

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sweeping and placed her hands on her hips, the better to look up at him.

Tío Lucas scratched his head, as if endeavouring to rake up some very deep-rooted idea, until he finally said with more than his accustomed seriousness and elegance:

"I would be some one else, because now I am a man who believes in you as in his very self, and who has no other faith in life but that. Consequently, the minute I stopped believing in you, I would either die, or become a different man; I would live differently; it would seem as if I had just been born; I would have another heart! So I don't know what I would do to you. . . . Perhaps I would laugh at you and turn my back on you. Perhaps I wouldn't even recognize you. . . . Perhaps — but this is a nice kind of fun to be having — getting all wrought up over nothing! What difference would it make if all the corregidors in the world loved you? Aren't you my Frasquita?"

"Yes, you wild man!" replied the Navarrese, laughing till she could laugh no more. "I am

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your Frasquita, and you are my own dear Lucas, homlier than a bogey-man, cleverer than any other man I know, nicer than bread, and I love you more than — Ah! As for *loving* you: just you wait until you get down from that arbour and you'll see! Get ready to take more blows and pinches than there are hairs in your head! But hush! What do I see? The Señor Corregidor is coming this way entirely alone. . . . And so early! He's got something up his sleeve. You were right, it seems!"

"Well, don't get excited, and don't tell him I am up here. He is coming to make love to you alone, and thinks he is going to rob me while I take my siesta! I want to amuse myself by listening to his explanation."

As Tío Lucas said this, he handed the basket to his wife.

"That's not a bad idea!" she exclaimed, laughing anew. "The devilish old Madrilene! What do you suppose he thinks a corregidor is to me? But here he comes. And of course Garduña, who was some distance behind him, has sat down in

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the shade in the ravine. What nonsense! Be careful to hide well among the leaves, for we are going to laugh harder than you think. . . ."

And this said, the beautiful Navarrese began to sing a fandango which was as familiar to her now as the songs of her own country.

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XI

THE BOMBARDMENT OF PAMPLONA

"GOD keep you, Frasquita," said the Corregidor in a low voice, as he entered the grape-arbour on tip-toe.

"You are too good, Señor Corregidor!" she replied in her natural voice, courtesying again and again. "Your Worship here at this hour! And in this heat! Come, sit down, Your Lordship! It's nice and cool in here. How is it that Your Lordship did not wait for the other gentlemen? Here are their seats, all ready for them. . . . This afternoon we are expecting the Señor Bishop himself, who promised my Lucas to come and sample our first grapes. And how goes it with Your Lordship? How is the Señora?"

The Corregidor was confused. The desired solitude in which he found Señá Frasquita

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seemed like a dream to him, or like a snare which an unkind fate had set in order to hurl him into the abyss of a disappointment.

He limited himself, then, to replying:

"It isn't as early as you say. . . . It must be about half past three. . . ."

At that very moment the parrot screeched.

"It is a quarter past two," said the Navarrese, looking fixedly at the Madrilene.

The latter fell silent, like a convicted criminal who abandons his defense.

"Where is Lucas? Is he asleep?" he asked after a pause.

(We ought to note here that the Corregidor, like all persons who have no teeth, spoke with a soft hissing enunciation, as if he were chewing his lips.)

"Of course!" answered Señá Frasquita. "At this hour of the day he falls asleep wherever he happens to be, even if it is on the edge of a precipice . . ."

"See here, then — let him sleep!" exclaimed the old Corregidor, turning paler than ever. "And you, my dear Frasquita, listen to me . . .

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listen . . . come here . . . sit here by my side! I have much to say to you . . ."

"Here I am seated," replied the miller's wife, seizing a low chair and placing it close to and in front of the Corregidor's.

When she had seated herself, Frasquita threw one leg over the other, leaned forward a bit, rested an elbow upon the balanced knee, and her fresh and pretty face in one of her hands; and thus, with her head tipped slightly to one side, her five dimples in action, and her serene eyes fastened upon the Corregidor, she awaited His Lordship's declaration. One might have compared her to Pamplona awaiting a bombardment.

The poor man started to speak, but his mouth remained open — spell-bound by that majestic beauty, by that display of charms, by that formidable woman of alabastrine colour, with her exuberant flesh, her clean and smiling mouth, her blue, unfathomable eyes, who looked as if she had been created by the brush of Rubens.

"Frasquita!" the king's representative at last murmured in feeble accents, while his withered face, covered with perspiration and standing out

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from his hump, expressed extreme anguish.—"Frasquita!"

"That is my name!" answered the daughter of the Pyrenees — "What is it?"

"Anything you like," replied the old man with unbounded tenderness.

"Well," said the miller's wife, "Your Worship already knows what I want. I want Your Worship to appoint a nephew of mine who lives in Estella, as secretary of the Municipal Council of the City so he can come here from those mountains where he is having such a hard time of it . . ."

"I have already told you, Frasquita, that that is impossible. The present secretary —"

"Is a thief, a drunkard, and a beast!"

"I know it . . . But he has great influence with the permanent councilors, and I cannot appoint another without the consent of the Council. Indeed, I risk —"

"'Risk!'—'Risk!' Wouldn't we risk the very cats in our house for Your Lordship?"

"Would you love me at such a price?" stammered the Corregidor.

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"No, Señor; I love Your Worship gratis."

"Woman, don't use a title with me! Call me just 'you,' or anything you like . . . So you are going to love me? — Tell me."

"But am I not telling you that I already love you?"

"But —"

"Never mind your buts. Just you wait and see how good-looking and what a fine fellow my nephew is!"

"You are the one who is good-looking, Frascuela!"—

"Do you like me?"

"Indeed I do! — There is no woman like you!"

"Well, there certainly is nothing artificial about this," replied Señá Frasquita, rolling up her sleeve and showing the Corregidor the rest of her arm, which was worthy of a caryatid, and whiter than a lily.

"Indeed I do like you!" continued the Corregidor. "Day and night, every hour, everywhere, I think only of you!"

"Well, well! Don't you like the Señora Corregidora?" asked Señá Frasquita with such ill-

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assumed compassion that it would have made a hypochondriac laugh to see her.

"What a shame! My Lucas told me that he had the pleasure of seeing her and speaking to her when he went to fix your bedroom clock, and that she was very pretty, very nice, and very friendly."

"Scarcely as much as that! Scarcely as much as that!" murmured the Corregidor rather bitterly.

"On the other hand," continued the miller's wife, "others have told me that she has a very bad disposition, that she is very jealous, and that you are more afraid of her than you are of a green stick."

"Scarcely as much as that, woman!" repeated Don Eugenio de Zúñga y Ponce de León, turning red. "Scarcely as much as that, and scarcely as little! The Señora has her peculiarities, that's true — but there is a great deal of difference between that and my being afraid of her. I am the Corregidor!"

"But, in short — do you, or do you not love her?"

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"I'll tell you. I love her a great deal — or rather, I did before I met you. But since I first saw you, I don't know what is the matter with me — and she herself knows that *something* is wrong with me — Suffice it for you to know that now, for example, when I chuck my wife under the chin, it has the same effect upon me as if I were chucking myself under the chin. . . . So you see that I cannot love her more nor feel less! While just to grasp that hand, that arm, that face, that waist — I would give — what I haven't got!"

And as he spoke, the Corregidor attempted to take possession of the bare arm that Señá Frasquita was displaying in the flesh before his eyes. But without losing her composure, she extended her hand, touched His Lordship's breast with the pacific violence and irresistible rigidity of an elephant's trunk, and tipped him over backwards, chair and all.

"*Ave María Purísima!*" cried the Navarrese, laughing till she could laugh no more. "I think the chair must have been broken —"

"What is going on here?" exclaimed Tío

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Lucas at this point, sticking his homely face through the leaves of the arbour.

The Corregidor was still on the ground, face upward, and he gazed in unspeakable terror upon the man who appeared as it were, in the air, face downward.

One might have said that His Lordship was the devil, conquered — not by St. Michael, but by a fellow demon of the infernal regions.

"What do you *suppose* has happened?" Señá Frasquita hastened to reply. "The Señor Corregidor placed his chair too near the edge, started to rock, and fell over!"

"*Jesús, María y José!*" exclaimed the miller in his turn. "Is Your Lordship hurt? Do you wish a little water and vinegar?"

"Not in the least!" said the Corregidor, picking himself up as best he could.

And then in a low voice, but loud enough for Señá Frasquita to hear, he added:

"You shall pay me for this!"

"On the other hand, Your Lordship has saved my life," rejoined Tío Lucas without moving from

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the top of the arbour. "Just think of it, wife; I was sitting here looking at the grapes, when I fell asleep on a network of vine-shoots and sticks that has open spaces plenty large enough to let my body through.— So, if His Lordship's fall had not awakened me in time, this afternoon I should have broken my head on those stones."

"Indeed — eh?" replied the Corregidor. "Well, see here, my man, I'm glad! I tell you, I'm glad I fell!"

"You shall pay me for it!" he added shortly, addressing himself to the miller's wife.

And he pronounced these words with such an expression of concentrated fury, that Señá Frasquita looked downcast.

She saw clearly that the Corregidor was afraid at first, believing that the miller had overheard everything; but that, convinced that he had really heard nothing (since the calmness and dissimulation of Tío Lucas would have deceived the most acute), he was beginning to give himself up entirely to his malice and to conceive plans of vengeance.

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"Come! Get down and help me brush off His Lordship; he's just covered with dust!" the miller's wife exclaimed at this point.

And as Tío Lucas was descending, she said to the Corregidor as she dealt several blows to his jacket — and a few to his ears — with her apron:

"The poor fellow never heard a thing. He was sleeping like a log."

Aside from these phrases in themselves, the fact that they were spoken in a low voice, producing an effect of complicity and secrecy, caused a marvelous change in him.

"You rogue! Insolent one!" sputtered Don Eugenio de Zúñiga with his mouth watering, but still groaning.

"Will Your Lordship hold it against me?" asked the Navarrese coaxingly.

Seeing that severity brought him good results, the Corregidor attempted to look at Señá Frasquita as though in a great rage; but he encountered her tempting smile and her divine eyes, shining with the caress of an entreaty; and, his anger subsiding suddenly, he said to her in

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drivelling and hissing accents in which his entire lack of teeth was more in evidence than ever:

"That depends upon you, my love!"

At that moment Tío Lucas swung himself down from the arbour.

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XII

TITHES AND FIRST-FRUITS

WHEN the Corregidor had been re-established in his chair, the miller's wife cast a hasty glance at her spouse and saw that he was as calm as ever, but bursting with a desire to laugh. She tossed him a kiss from a distance, taking advantage of the first moment of inattention on Don Eugenio's part, and finally said to the latter in a siren-like voice that Cleopatra herself might have envied:

"Now Your Worship is going to try my grapes!"

Then you should have seen the beautiful Navarrese (and this is how I should paint her had I the brush of Titian) as she stood firmly in front of the amazed Corregidor,— fresh, magnificent, seductive, with her noble form, her close-fitting dress, her tall stature, her bare arms lifted over

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her head, and with a transparent bunch of grapes in each hand, saying between an irresistible smile and a suppliant look in which there was a trace of fear:

"Even the Señor Bishop has not tasted them yet . . . They are the first we have picked this year . . ."

She resembled a gigantic Pomona offering fruit to a bucolic god — a satyr, for example.

At this moment the venerable Bishop of the Diocese appeared at the end of the paved courtyard accompanied by the academic lawyer and two canons of advanced age; and followed by his secretary, two familiars, and two pages.

His Lordship paused a moment to contemplate that comic and beautiful picture, until at last he said in the calm accents peculiar to the prelates of those days:

"*Fifth:—to pay tithes and first-fruits to the Church of God,* as the Christian Doctrine teaches us: but you, Señor Corregidor, are not content with administering the tithes, but must needs also take it upon yourself to eat the first-fruits."

"The Señor Bishop!" exclaimed the miller

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and his wife, leaving the Corregidor and running to kiss the Prelate's ring.

"May God repay Your Lordship for coming to honour this poor hut!" said Tío Lucas, who was the first to kiss the ring, in accents of very sincere veneration.

"How handsome the Señor Bishop looks!" exclaimed Señá Frasquita, following her husband's example. "God bless him and keep him for me longer than He keeps me for my Lucas!"

"I don't see what need you can have of me, when you shower blessings upon me instead of asking me for them!" replied the kindly Pastor with a smile.

And, extending his finger, he blessed, first Señá Frasquita, and then the others who stood near.

"Here are the first-fruits for Your Lordship!" said the Corregidor, taking a bunch from the miller's wife and presenting them courteously to the Bishop. "I have not yet tasted the grapes."

As the Corregidor pronounced these words he directed a rapid and malicious glance at the radiant beauty of the miller's wife.

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"Well, that cannot be because they are sour, like those in the fable," observed the academician.

"Those in the fable," expounded the Bishop, "were not sour, Señor Licentiate; but out of the fox's reach."

Neither of them had meant to allude to the Corregidor; but both phrases happened to be so exactly à propos what had just occurred that Don Eugenio de Zúñiga turned livid with rage, and said, as he kissed the Prelate's ring:

"That is calling me a fox, Your Lordship!"

"*Tu dixisti!*" he replied, with the affable serenity of a saint, as they say he really was. "*Excusatio non petita, accusatio manifesta. Qualis vir, talis oratio.* But, *satis jam dictum, nullus ultra sit sermo.* Or, what amounts to the same thing: let us leave our Latin and examine these famous grapes."

And he plucked — just once — at the bunch that the Corregidor held out to him.

"They are very good!" he exclaimed, holding the grape up to the light and immediately handing it to his secretary. "It is a pity they do not agree with me!"

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The secretary also looked at the grape, made a gesture or courtly admiration, and handed it to one of the familiars.

The familiar repeated the action of the Bishop and the gesture of the secretary, forgetting himself to the extent of smelling the grape, and then — placed it in his basket with scruplous care, not without saying to the bystanders in a low voice:

"His Lordship fasts . . ."

Then Tío Lucas, who had followed the grape with his eyes, slyly removed it and ate it without any one noticing him.

After that, they all sat down; chatted about the autumn season (which had continued to be very dry in spite of the fact that the autumnal equinox had passed); had a brief discussion of the probability of another war between Napoleon and Austria; were insistent in their belief that the imperial troops would never invade Spanish territory; the lawyer complained of the storminess and calamitousness of the period, envying the quiet days of his fathers (as his fathers would have envied those of his grandfathers); the par-

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rot "struck" five — and, at a signal from the reverend Bishop, the smaller of the pages went to the episcopal carriage (which had stopped in the very same ravine which sheltered the alguacil), and returned with a magnificent cake made of bread and oil sprinkled with salt, which must have come from the oven scarce an hour before: a table was set up in the midst of the concourse; the cake was cut; a suitable portion was given to Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita in spite of their remonstrances —, and a truly democratic equality reigned for half an hour beneath the grape leaves through which filtered the last rays of the setting sun . . .

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XIII

SAID THE POT TO THE KETTLE

AN hour and a half later all the illustrious luncheon companions were back in the City.

The Señor Bishop and his *family* had arrived considerably before the others, thanks to the carriage, and were already *en palacio,* where we shall leave them to their devotions.

The distinguished lawyer (who was very thin) and the two canons (each fatter and more respectable than the other) accompanied the Corregidor to the door of the City Hall (where His Honour said he had some work to do), and then made their way to their respective homes, guiding themselves by the stars like sea-farers, or groping at the corners like blind men. For night had already fallen, the moon had not yet risen, and

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the public light (like other lights in our century) was as yet in the Divine Mind.

Still, it was no uncommon sight to see moving along some of the streets some sort of a lamp or lantern with which a respectful servant was lighting the steps of his magnificent masters, who were on their way to the habitual coterie or to pay a visit at the house of some relative.

Near almost any of the lower window-gratings one could see (or rather, sense) a silent black form. These were gallants who had left off talking to their sweethearts when they heard footsteps —

"We are perfect rakes!" the lawyer and the canons kept telling each other. "What will they think at home when they see us arriving at this hour?"

"Why, what will those people say whom we meet in the street this way, at seven o'clock at night, as if we were a gang of robbers seeking the protection of the darkness?"

"We must improve our conduct."

"Yes, indeed! — But that wonderful mill!"

"My wife cannot stomach it," said the acade-

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mician in a tone in which there was revealed a considerable amount of fear for the approaching conjugal quarrel.

"Well, what about my niece?" exclaimed one of the canons who was a penitentiary. "My niece says that priests ought not to call on gossiping women."

"And yet," interrupted his companion, who was a magistral; "nothing could be more innocent than what goes on there."

"Naturally, seeing that the Señor Bishop himself goes there!"

"And then, Señores, think of our age!" responded the penitentiary. "Yesterday I completed my seventy-fifth year."

"Of course!" replied the magistral. "But let us speak of something else: how pretty Señá Frasquita looked this afternoon!"

"Oh, as far as that goes — she is pretty enough!" said the lawyer, affecting impartiality.

"Very pretty," repeated the penitentiary into his muffler.

"And if you don't think so," added the magistral; "just ask the Corregidor —"

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"The poor man is in love with her!"

"I should say he is!" exclaimed the Cathedral confessor.

"Of course!" added the (corresponding) academician —"Well, Señores, I go this way to get home quicker. Good night!"

"Good night!" replied the capitulars. They took a few steps in silence. Then —

"That chap also likes the miller's wife!" murmured the magistral, poking the penitentiary with his elbow.

"That's plain enough!" the latter replied as he stopped at the door of his house. "What an ugly brute he is! Well, until tomorrow, comrade. May the grapes agree with you perfectly!"

"Until tomorrow, God willing . . . May you sleep well."

"God grant us a good night!" prayed the penitentiary from his doorway which contained a lamp and a Virgin by way of further distinction.

Then he pounded upon the knocker.

As soon as he was alone in the street, the other canon (who was broader than he was tall, and

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consequently looked as if he were rolling rather than walking) proceeded to advance slowly toward his house; but before he got there he stopped and murmured — doubtless thinking of his colleague of the choir:

"You too like Señá Frasquita! And to tell the truth," he added after a pause; "she *is* rather pretty!"

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XIV

GARDUÑA'S ADVICE

MEANWHILE, the Corregidor had gone to the City Hall accompanied by Garduña, with whom in the hall of sessions he had for some time been carrying on a conversation which was more familiar than was suitable for a person of his station and authority.

"Your Worship must believe a hunting dog who knows the chase!" the ignoble alguacil was saying. "Señá Frasquita is head over heels in love with you; and everything that you have just told me makes me see it plainer than that light —"

And he pointed to a Lucena lamp that scarcely lighted one-eighth of the hall.

"I am not so sure as you are, Garduña!" replied Don Eugenio with a languid sigh.

"Well, I don't see why not! If you don't be-

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lieve me, let us speak frankly. If you will pardon me, Your Worship has a bodily defect,— isn't that so?"

"Why, yes!" replied the Corregidor. "But Tío Lucas also has one. He is more hunchbacked than I!"

"Much more! Very much more! There isn't the slightest comparison! But on the other hand (and this is what I was coming to), Your Worship has a face that is very good to look upon — what one might call a handsome face — while Tío Lucas looks like Sergeant Utrero, who was so ugly he burst."

The Corregidor smiled complacently.

"Besides," proceeded the alguacil, "Señá Frasquita would throw herself out of the window just to help along her nephew's appointment even a little —"

"So far, we are agreed. That appointment is my only hope!"

"Well, to work, Señor! I have already told you my plan — all we have to do is to put it into execution this very night!"

"I've told you many times that I need no ad-

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vice!" shouted Don Eugenio, who suddenly remembered that he was talking to an inferior.

"I thought Your Worship asked me for it," stammered Garduña.

"Don't answer me!"

Garduña bowed.

"You were saying," proceeded de Zúñiga, calming himself once more; "that everything can be arranged this very night? Well, see here, my boy — it looks all right to me! What the devil! In this way I shall soon be rid of this cruel uncertainty!"

Garduña was silent.

The Corregidor went to a desk and wrote a few lines on a stamped paper which he stamped again himself and thrust into his pocket.

"Now the nephew's appointment is made!" he said, taking a pinch of snuff. "Tomorrow I shall arrange matters with the Councillors — and they will either ratify it unanimously, or there will be a tremendous row. Don't you think I am doing the right thing?"

"That's it! that's it!" exclaimed Garduña enthusiastically, thrusting his claw into the Cor-

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regidor's snuff-box and snatching some snuff. "That's it! that's it! Your predecessor never stopped at obstacles. Once —"

"Stop your nonsense!" replied the Corregidor, slapping the thievish hand. "My predecessor was a beast — especially when he took you as his alguacil. But to return to important matters: You just told me that Tío Lucas' mill belongs in the district of the next village. Are you sure of it?"

"Absolutely! The jurisdiction of the City ends at the ravine where I sat down to wait for Your Lordship this afternoon. By Lucifer! If I had been in your shoes!"

"Enough!" shouted Don Eugenio. "You are insolent!" And, seizing a half sheet of paper, he wrote a note, sealed it by folding it once or twice, and handed it to Garduña.

"Here," said he as he did so; "is the letter to the alcalde of the Village which you asked me for. You will explain to him by word of mouth everything he is to do. So you see I am following your plan to the letter! Heaven help you if you get me into a blind alley!"

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"Don't you worry!" replied Garduña. "Señor Juan López has much to fear from you, and as soon as he sees Your Worship's signature, he'll do anything you ask him to. He owes at least a thousand *fanegas*[1] of grain to the Army Storehouse, and a like amount to the Charity Storehouse! That last is contrary to all law, since he is no widow or poor farmer to get the wheat without paying interest or charges; but a gambler, a drunkard, and a scoundrel who is very fond of the ladies, and who scandalizes the village — And that man has authority! That's the way of the world!"

"I tell you to be still! You are distracting me!" bellowed the Corregidor. "But let us get to the point," he added with a change of tone. "It is now a quarter past seven — The first thing you have to do is to go to my house and tell my wife not to expect me to supper or to bed. Tell her that tonight I shall be working here until curfew, and that then I shall go out with you to make a secret round, to see if we cannot catch

[1] *Fanega:* a dry measure containing about 50 quarts.

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some criminals . . . In a word, deceive her well so she will go to bed and not worry. On your way, tell another alguacil to bring me some supper. I don't dare appear before my wife tonight because she knows me so well that she can read my very thoughts! Tell the cook to put in some of those fritters that she made today, and tell Juanete to bring me a pint of white wine from the tavern without letting any one see him. Then go immediately to the Village, which you can easily reach by half past eight."

"I'll be there at exactly eight o'clock!" exclaimed Garduña.

"Don't contradict me!" roared the Corregidor, again remembering his official position.

Garduña bowed.

"We said," he continued, once more unbending "that you will be in the Village at exactly eight o'clock. From the Village to the mill it will be — I think it will be half a league . . .

"Less —"

"Don't interrupt me!"

The alguacil once more bowed.

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"Less," proceeded the Corregidor. "So, at ten o'clock — Do you think it will be ten o'clock?"

"Before ten! At half past nine Your Worship may knock fearlessly upon the door of the mill!"

"Man! Don't tell me what I have to do! Of course you will be —"

"I shall be everywhere. But my headquarters will be the ravine. Ah! I forgot! You must go afoot, and must not carry a lantern."

"Confound you! I don't need that advice either! Do you think that this is the first time I have ever taken the field?"

"Pardon me, Your Worship.— Oh! Another thing: Don't knock at the large door that opens on the courtyard; but at the little door over the mill-race —"

"Is there another door over the mill-race? Now that is something that would never have occurred to me!"

"Sí, Señor. The little door over the mill-race opens right into their bedroom, and Tío Lucas never comes in or out of it. So that, even if he should return suddenly —"

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"I understand, I understand. Don't deafen my ears any more!"

"Finally: Your Worship must try to slip away before dawn. It grows light at six o'clock now —"

"There's another useless piece of advice! I shall be back at home at five o'clock. But we've said enough now. Leave my presence!"

"Well then, Señor — good luck!" exclaimed the alguacil, holding out his hand sideways to the Corregidor and gazing at the ceiling as he did so.

The Corregidor placed a peseta in the hand, and Garduña disappeared as if by magic.

"By the life of —," murmured the old man after a moment. "I forgot to tell that idiot to have them bring me a pack of cards too! I could have amused myself with them until nine-thirty by seeing if the *solitaire* would come out well! —

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XV

A PROSAIC FAREWELL

IT must have been about nine o'clock that same night that Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita, after all the duties of the household had been attended to, were supping upon a dish of endive salad, a pound or so of meat cooked with tomatoes, and a few grapes that remained in the aforementioned basket — the whole mixed with a bit of wine and much laughter at the Corregidor's expense. After supper, husband and wife looked at each other affably, as though very content with God and with themselves, and said between a couple of yawns that revealed the utter peace and tranquillity of their hearts:

"Well, let's go to bed — and tomorrow will be another day."

At that moment, two strong and authoritative

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blows sounded upon the large outer door of the mill.

The husband and wife looked at each other in surprise.

It was the first time they had ever heard such a summons at that hour.

"I'm going to see who it is," said the intrepid Navarrese, as she started toward the courtyard.

"Stop! That's for me to do!" cried Tío Lucas with so much dignity that Señá Frasquita gave way to him. "I told you not to go!" he added, when he saw that his obstinate wife was trying to follow him.

She obeyed, and remained behind in the house.

"Who is it?" asked Tío Lucas from the middle of the courtyard.

"The Justice!" answered a voice on the other side of the door.

"What Justice?"

"The one from the Village. Open to the Señor Alcalde!"

Meanwhile Tío Lucas, applying his eye to a certain carefully hidden peep-hole in the door, had

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recognized by the light of the moon the rustic alguacil of the neighbouring village.

"You'd better tell me to open to the drunken alguacil!" replied the miller, lifting the bar.

"It's all the same," answered the man outside; "since I bring an order written by His Honour! A very good evening to you, Tío Lucas," he added as he entered. This time he spoke in his less official voice, which was lower and thicker than at first — as if he were now an entirely different person.

"God keep you, Toñuelo!" responded the Murcian. "Let's see what your order is. Señor Juan López might have chosen a better time to write to a decent man! I suppose it's your fault, though. Any one can see that you've been getting drunk in the orchards along the way! Will you have a mouthful?"

"No, Señor; there isn't time. You must follow me immediately! Read the order."

"What do you mean, follow you?" exclaimed Tío Lucas, entering the mill after seizing the paper "Let's have a light, Frasquita!"

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Señá Frasquita dropped something she had in her hand and took down a lamp.

Tío Lucas cast a rapid glance at the object his wife had dropped, and recognized his huge bell-mouthed blunderbuss that carried half-pound balls.

The miller then directed a glance full of gratitude and tenderness toward the Navarrese, and said to her as he patted her cheek:

"What a wonder you are!"

Señá Frasquita, pale and serene as a statue of marble, raised the lamp, which she had grasped between her thumb and forefinger, and replied dryly:

"Come, read it!"

This was the order:

For the better service of H. M. the King our Lord (Whom God preserve), I hereby summon Lucas Fernandez, a miller of this vicinity, as soon as he receives this order, to appear before my authority without any excuses or pretexts whatsoever; and I do hereby notify him, that being a private matter, he must not take any one into his confidence: all this under suitable punishment in case of disobedience.

— The Alcalde: JUAN LOPEZ.

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Instead of a flourish there was a cross.

"Here, you! What does this mean?" Tío Lucas questioned the alguacil. "What is this order for?"

"I don't know"; replied the rustic,— a man about thirty years old, whose angular and irregular features, like those of a thief or an assassin, gave a very poor idea of his sincerity. "I think it has something to do with witchcraft or counterfeit money — But it has nothing to do with you — They are calling you as a witness or an expert. In short, I didn't learn the particulars . . . Señor Juan López will explain it to you in more detail."

"All right!" exclaimed the miller. "Tell him that I'll come tomorrow."

"*Ca!* No, Señor! You must come right now without losing a minute. That is the order the Señor Alcalde gave me."

There was an instant of silence.

Señá Frasquita's eyes were aflame.

Tío Lucas never lifted his own from the floor, as if he were looking for something there.

"At least you will give me time enough to go

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to the stable and saddle a burra," he exclaimed finally as he lifted his head.

"What the devil do you want with a burra!" replied the alguacil. "Anybody can walk half a league! It's a beautiful night, and the moon is out —"

"I know it is — but my feet are very swollen."

"Then we mustn't lose any time. I'll help you saddle the beast."

"Oho! Oho! So you are afraid I'll escape?"

"I'm not afraid of anything, Tío Lucas," replied Toñuelo with the coldness of a dead man. "I am the Justice."

And as he spoke, he *grounded arms;* by which manœuvre he let them see the fowling-piece he carried beneath his cloak.

"Well, look here, Toñuelo," said the miller's wife. "Now that you are going to the stable — to exercise your true office,— do me the favour of saddling the other burra too."

"What for?" questioned the miller.

"For me! — I'm going with you."

"That won't do, Señá Frasquita," objected the alguacil. "I have my orders to take your hus-

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band, and that's all; and to prevent your following him. And my 'position and neck' depend on it. That is what Señor Juan López told me. So, come on, Tío Lucas —"

And he started for the door.

"It's the strangest thing!" said the Murcian in a low voice, without stirring.

"Very strange," answered Señá Frasquita.

"Something is up — I know that," Tío Lucas continued to whisper in order to prevent Toñuelo from hearing him.

"Do you want me to go to the City," whispered the Navarrese, "and tell the Corregidor what is happening to us?"

"No!" replied Tío Lucas aloud. "Not that!"

"Then what do you want me to do?" said his wife vehemently.

"Look at me," replied the old soldier.

Husband and wife looked at each other in silence, and were both so satisfied with the tranquility, the resolution, and the energy that their souls communicated to each other, that they ended by shrugging their shoulders and laughing.

After this, Tío Lucas lit another lamp and

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made his way to the stable; remarking slyly to Toñuelo on the way:

"Come on and help me, man! Since you are so kind!"

Toñuelo followed him, humming a song between his teeth.

A few minutes later, Tío Lucas left the mill mounted on a beautiful burra and followed by the alguacil.

The couple's farewell had been reduced to the following:

"Lock up tight," said Tío Lucas.

"Wrap yourself up; it's pretty cold," said Señá Frasquita, as she locked the door with key, bolt, and bar.

And there was no other word of good-bye, nor kiss, nor embrace, nor glance.

Why?

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XVI

A BIRD OF EVIL PORTENT

LET us now follow Tío Lucas.

They had travelled a quarter of a league without saying a word — the miller mounted on his burra, and the alguacil urging it on with his staff of office — when they discerned on top of a rise in the road ahead of them the approaching shadow of a monstrous bird.

The shadow stood out sharply against the sky, which was illumined by the moon, and was so well outlined against it that the miller exclaimed at once:

"Toñuelo, that is Garduña with his three-cornered hat and his spindle-shanks!"

But before the person spoken to could answer, the shadow, doubtless desirous of avoiding that encounter, had left the road and begun to run across country with the speed of a weasel.

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"I don't see anybody," replied Toñuelo with the greatest of ease.

"Neither do I," rejoined Tío Lucas, seeing that something was up.

But the suspicion which had already occurred to him in the mill, began to take shape and substance in the mind of the jealous hunchback.

"This trip of mine," he said to himself, "is a strategem of the amorous Corregidor's. The declaration which I heard him make this afternoon from my place on top of the grape arbour proves to my mind that the little old Madrilene can wait no longer. Indubitably he is going back to the mill tonight, and that is why he has begun by getting me out of the way. But, what of it? Frasquita is Frasquita — and she would never open the door even if they set the house on fire! Besides: even if she should open it; even if the Corregidor should succeed by means of some deception or other in surprising my excellent Navarrese, the old rascal would leave with his head in his hands. Frasquita is Frasquita! — Nevertheless," he added after a mo-

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ment, "it will be just as well to get back home tonight as soon as I possibly can!"

At this point, Tío Lucas and the alguacil arrived at the Village and made their way to the house of the Señor Alcalde.

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XVII

A COUNTRY ALCALDE

SEÑOR JUAN LOPEZ, both as a private citizen and as an alcalde was tyranny, ferocity, and pride personified (when he dealt with his inferiors). However, at that hour of the night, after dispatching his official duties and his private agricultural business, and after giving his wife her daily beating, he condescended to drink a jar of wine in the company of his secretary and the sacristan — an operation that was more than half finished when the miller appeared before his presence.

"Hello, Tío Lucas!" he said to him, scratching his head to stir up his vein of lies. "How's your health? Here, Secretary; hand Tío Lucas a glass of wine! And Señá Frasquita? Is she still keeping her beauty? I haven't seen her for a long time now. But, man alive — how fine the grist is these days! Our rye bread looks as if it

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were made of winter wheat! Well — here! Sit down and rest yourself! Thank God we aren't in any hurry!"

"Devil a bit on my part," answered Tío Lucas, who up to that point had not opened his lips, but whose suspicions were augmenting more and more as he saw the friendly reception he was given after such a terrible and urgent message.

"Well then, Tío Lucas," continued the alcalde, "Inasmuch as you aren't in any great hurry, you will sleep here tonight, and tomorrow morning we shall dispatch our little business —"

"All right," responded Tío Lucas with an irony and a feigned innocence that were by no means inferior to the diplomacy of Señor Juan López. "Since the case is not urgent, I'll spend the night away from home."

"Neither urgent, nor of any danger to yourself," added the alcalde, deceived by him whom he thought to deceive. "You may be completely at your ease. Here you, Toñuelo . . . Bring out that half-keg so Tío Lucas can sit down."

"Well, let's have another drink!" exclaimed the miller as he sat down.

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"Here you are!" replied the alcalde, handing him a full glass.

"It's in good hands — take half of it."

"Well, here's to your health!" said Señor Juan López, drinking half the wine.

"Here's to yours, Señor Alcalde," replied Tío Lucas, draining the remaining half.

"Here, Manuela!" the country alcalde shouted. "Tell your mistress that Tío Lucas is going to sleep here tonight. Tell her to make him up a bed in the granary —"

"*Ca!* No — by no means! I'll sleep in the straw like a king."

"See here; we have some bedding —"

"Of course! But why do you wish to disturb the family? I have my cloak —"

"Well, Señor; as you wish. Manuela! Tell your mistress to never mind —"

"What you really can let me do," continued Tío Lucas with an atrocious yawn, "is to go to bed immediately. I had a lot of grist last night, and I haven't had a chance to close my eyes since."

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"Granted!" replied the alcalde majestically. "You may retire when you wish."

"I think it is time for us to retire also," said the sacristan, peeping into the wine jar to estimate the amount left. "It must be ten o'clock, or a little less."

"Just a quarter to ten," announced the secretary after pouring the rest of the wine that was due them that evening into the glasses.

"Well, to bed, Señores!" exclaimed the host as he drained his share.

"Until tomorrow, Señores," added the miller as he drank his.

"Wait until they bring you a light. Toñuelo! Show Tío Lucas to the straw loft."

"This way, Tío Lucas!" said Toñuelo, taking the jar with him in the hope that there might be a few drops left.

"Until tomorrow, God willing," added the sacristan, after draining all the glasses.

And he went out — staggering, and joyfully singing the *De Profundis*.

. . . . . .

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"Well, Señor," said the alcalde to the secretary when they were alone; Tío Lucas never suspected a thing! We can go to bed in peace, and — much good may it do the Corregidor!"

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XVIII

IN WHICH IT IS SEEN THAT TIO LUCAS SLEPT VERY LIGHTLY

FIVE minutes later, a man swung down from the window of the Señor Alcalde's straw loft; a window which opened on the corral, and which was distant not more than four yards from the ground.

In the corral there was a shelter built over a long row of mangers to which were tied six or eight horses of diverse lineage, though all of them of the weaker sex. The horses, mules, and burros of the stronger sex formed a camp apart in a contiguous spot.

The man untied a burra which was, of course, saddled, and started toward the corral gate, leading her by the halter. He lifted the bar and slid back the bolt that secured the gate,

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opened it very cautiously, and found himself in the open country.

Once there, he mounted the burra, gave her a good kick, and sped like an arrow in the direction of the City — not by the ordinary road, however, but across sown fields and ravines, as one who is on his guard against some evil encounter.

It was Tío Lucas, on his way to the mill.

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XIX

VOICES CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

"ALCALDES to me: I'm from Archena!" the Murcian kept saying to himself. "Tomorrow morning, as a preventive measure, I'll go and see the Señor Bishop and tell him everything that has happened tonight! To call me in such haste and secrecy at such an unusual hour; to tell me that I must go alone; to speak of the service of the King, and counterfeit money, and witchcraft, and goblins, just to hand me two glasses of wine and send me to bed! It couldn't be plainer! Garduña brought those instructions to the Village for the Corregidor, and about this time the Corregidor will be taking the field against my wife — I might even find him knocking at the mill door! I might even find him inside! I might — ! But what was I going to say?

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Doubt my Navarrese? Oh, that would be to offend God! It is impossible that she — ! Impossible that my Frasquita — ! Impossible — ! But what am I saying? Is anything in this world impossible? Didn't she marry me — she so pretty, and I so ugly?"

And as he voiced this last reflection, the poor hunchback began to weep. . . .

Just then the burra stopped to rest. He dried his tears; breathed a deep sigh; took out his smoking materials; broke up and rolled a cigarette of black tobacco; took his flint and tinder and steel; and after a few blows, succeeded in striking a light.

At that very moment he heard the sound of footsteps toward the road some three hundred rods away.

"How imprudent I am!" he said. "What if the Justice were already looking for me, and I had given myself away by striking a light!"

So he concealed the fire and dismounted, hiding himself behind the burra.

But the burra, having a different idea about the matter, gave vent to a bray of satisfaction.

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"Confound you!" cried Tío Lucas, trying to close her mouth with his hands.

At the same time, by way of a gallant reply, another bray resounded in the road.

"Now we *are* in a pickle!" thought the miller. "The proverb is right: *the worst of all evils is that of dealing with animals!*"

And discoursing thus, he remounted, clucked to his beast, and was off like a shot in the opposite direction to that from which the second bray had sounded.

The most peculiar part of it was that the person who was riding the donkey interlocutor must have been as frightened as Tío Lucas was. I say this because whoever it was also left the road, doubtless fearing that Tío Lucas was an alguacil or an evil-doer in the pay of Don Eugenio, and rushed off through the sown fields on the other side.

Meanwhile the Murcian continued to ruminate as follows:

"What a night! What a world! What a life I have led for the past hour! Alguacils turned procurers; alcaldes conspiring against my

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honour; burros braying when it wasn't necessary; and here, in my breast, a miserable heart that dares doubt the noblest woman God ever created! Oh! My God, my God! Help me to get home quickly and to find my Frasquita there!"

Tío Lucas proceeded on his way, across sown ground and stubble-fields, until at last, at about eleven o'clock, he arrived without further mishap at the large outer door of the mill. . . .

Damnation! The mill door was open!

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XX

DOUBT AND REALITY

IT was open — and when he left he had heard his wife close it with key, bar and bolt!

Therefore, no one else but his wife could have opened it.

But how? when? why? — Through some trick? On account of some order? Or very deliberately and voluntarily, by virtue of a previous agreement with the Corregidor?

What was he going to see? What was he going to learn? What awaited him within his house? Had Señá Frasquita run off? Had they stolen her? Was she dead? Or was she in the arms of his rival?

"The Corregidor counted upon my not being able to get back here all night," said Tío Lucas to himself lugubriously. "The alcalde of the

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Village must have had orders to put me in chains if necessary to keep me from coming back. . . . Did Frasquita know all this? Was she in the plot? Or has she been the victim of deception, or of violence, or of infamy?"

The unfortunate man spent no more time on these cruel reflections than it took to cross the pavement under the grape arbour.

The door of the house was also open. As in all country houses, the first room was the kitchen. . . .

There was no one in the kitchen.

Nevertheless, there was a huge blaze roaring in the fireplace — which he had left cold, and which was never lit until late in the month of December!

Finally, from one of the hooks on the shelf hung a lighted lamp. . . .

What did all this mean? And how did such signs of wakefulness and sociability tally with the deathlike silence that reigned in the house?

What had become of his wife?

Then, and then only did Tío Lucas become aware of some clothes that were hung on the

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backs of two or three chairs placed near the fireplace. . . .

He gazed at those clothes and gave vent to such an intense groan that it stuck in his throat and changed into a mute and stifled sob.

The poor unfortunate thought that he was going to choke, and he lifted his hands to his neck, as livid, convulsed, his eyes starting from their sockets, he gazed upon that clothing, possessed with as much horror as the criminal to whom they present the black robe of execution.

For what he saw there was the scarlet cloak, the three-corned hat, the dove-coloured tunic and waistcoat, the black silk breeches, the white stockings, the buckled shoes, and even the staff, the sword, and the gloves of the execrable Corregidor. What he saw there was the execution robe of his ignominy, the shroud of his honour, the winding-sheet of his good fortune!

The terrible blunderbuss stood in the same corner in which the Navarrese had left it two hours before. . . .

Tío Lucas gave a tiger-like leap and possessed himself of it. He sounded the barrel with the

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ramrod and found that it was loaded; glanced at the flint and saw that it was in place.

He then turned toward the stairway which led to the room where he had slept so many years with Señá Frasquita, and murmured thickly:

"They are there!"

Then he took a step in that direction, but immediately stopped and looked about him to see if any one were watching him. . . .

"Not a soul!" he said to himself. "Only God — and He — has wished this!"

His determination thus strengthened, he was about to take another step, when his errant vision fell upon a bit of paper which lay upon the table. . . .

To see it, to pounce upon it, and to have it in his claws was only a matter of a second.

That paper was the appointment of Señá Frasquita's nephew, signed by Don Eugenio de Zúñiga y Ponce de León!

"That was the price of the bargain!" thought Tío Lucas, thrusting the paper in his mouth in order to stifle his cries and to give food to his rage. "I was always afraid that she liked her

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family better than she did me! Ah! We have no children! — That is the cause of it all!"

The poor unfortunate was on the point of weeping again.

But then his fury returned, and he said with a terrible gesture rather than with his voice:

"Upstairs! Upstairs!"

And he began to climb the stairs, creeping along on all fours, carrying the blunderbuss in one hand, and the infamous paper between his teeth.

In corroboration of his logical suspicions, as he neared the door of his bedroom (which was closed), he saw a few rays of light shining through the cracks in the boards, and through the keyhole.

"They are in there!" he said again.

And he paused an instant as though to swallow this new draught of bitterness.

Then he went on — until he reached the very door of the bedroom.

Within, not a sound could be heard.

"If only no one were there!" Hope said to him timidly.

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But at that very instant the unhappy man heard a cough within the room. . . .

It was the half-asthmatic cough of the Corregidor!

There was no room for doubt now! There was no life-saving plank in that shipwreck!

The miller grinned in the darkness in a horrible manner. Why do not flashes like that shine in the darkness? What are all the fires of torment compared to those which sometimes burn in the heart of man?

Still, such was the make-up of Tío Lucas' soul (as we have remarked elsewhere), that no sooner had he heard his enemy's cough than he began to calm down. . . .

The reality hurt him less than the doubt. As he himself had declared that afternoon to Señá Frasquita, from the very hour and second in which he lost the only faith which was the life of his soul, he began to change into a different man.

Like the Moor of Venice (to whom we compared him when we were describing his character), the disappointment had destroyed all his love at one blow; transfiguring the character of

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his mind, and making him look upon the world as a strange region into which he had just arrived. The only difference lay in the fact that Tío Lucas was less tragic by disposition, less austere, and more selfish than the insensate sacrificer of Desdemona.

A strange thing, but peculiar to such situations! Doubt, or rather, Hope (for in this case they are the same) once more returned to mortify him a moment. . . .

"If only I were mistaken!" he thought. "If that had been Frasquita's cough!"—

In the tribulation of his calamity, he forgot that he had seen the Corregidor's clothes near the fireplace; that he had found the mill door open; that he had read the credentials of her infamy. . . .

He stooped then, and looked through the keyhole, trembling with uncertainty and anguish.

His field of vision only succeeded in embracing a small triangle near the head of the bed — But exactly within that little triangle, he could see the end of a pillow; and upon that pillow, the Corregidor's head!

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Another diabolical grin distorted the miller's face.

One might have almost said that he was again happy. . . .

"I am the master of the truth! — Let us think this over!" he whispered, quietly standing upright.

Then he descended the stairs with the same caution he had exercised in mounting them.

"It is a delicate matter. . . . I must reflect upon it. I have more than time enough for *everything,*" he thought as he descended.

As soon as he had reached the kitchen, he sat down in the middle of the floor and hid his face in his hands.

Thus he remained for a long time — until he was aroused from his meditations by a slight blow upon one of his feet. . . .

It was the blunderbuss, which had slid from his knees and had nudged him, as it were. . . .

"No! I tell you; no!" whispered Tío Lucas, facing the weapon. "I don't need you! Everybody would be sorry for *them,* and they would hang me! It is an affair with a corregidor, and

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to kill a corregidor is still something inexcusable in Spain! They would say that I had killed him on account of a groundless jealousy, and that I then undressed him and put him in my bed. . . . Then they would say that I killed my wife on a mere suspicion. . . . And they would hang me! Indeed they would! — Besides, I would have shown signs of having very little strength and talent if, at the end of my life, I were to be worthy of compassion! Everybody would laugh at me! They would say that my misfortune was very natural because I was a hunchback and Frasquita so pretty! Nothing of the sort! No! What I need is vengeance; and after avenging myself, I must triumph, scorn, laugh, laugh hard, laugh at everybody . . . and so prevent anybody from ever mocking the hump that I have succeeded in making even enviable, and which would look so grotesque on the gallows!"

And so Tío Lucas rambled on, scarcely heeding, perhaps, what he said. But as a result of the above discourse, he put the weapon back in its place and began to pace to and fro with his hands behind his back and his head bowed, as though

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seeking his vengeance on the floor, in the earth, among the ruins of his life, or in some ignominious and ridiculous prank that he intended to play upon his wife and the Corregidor; rather than in justice, in a duel, in forgiveness, or in heaven — as any other man in his place would have done who was less rebellious against all impositions of nature, of society, or of his own feelings.

Suddenly his eyes rested upon the Corregidor's clothes.

Then he stood still.

Next, little by little, an indefinable expression of joy, of happiness, and of triumph took possession of his features . . . until at last, he began to laugh in a terrifying manner . . . that is, heartily, but without making a sound (to prevent those upstairs from hearing him); holding his sides to keep from bursting, shivering like an epileptic, and ending by falling into a chair until the convulsion of sarcastic joy was over. It was genuinely Mephistophelian laughter.

No sooner had he calmed himself than he began to undress with feverish haste. He hung all

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his clothes upon the same chairs that had been occupied by those of the Corregidor; put on the garments that belonged to that gentleman — from the buckled shoes to the three-cornered hat; buckled on the sword; wrapped himself up in the scarlet cloak; seized the staff and the gloves; left the mill, and took the road toward the City, swaying from side to side exactly as Don Eugenio de Zúñiga was wont to do, and repeating from time to time the following phrase, which epitomized his thoughts:

"The Corregidor's wife is pretty too!"

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XXI

ON GUARD, CABALLERO!

LET us abandon Tío Lucas for the nonce and find out what took place at the mill from the time when we left Señà Frasquita there alone until her husband returned and encountered such stupendous and important matters.

About an hour had elapsed after Tío Lucas went off with Toñuelo, when the afflicted Navarrese, who had determined not to retire until her husband returned, and who was knitting in her bedroom, which was on the second floor, heard pitiful cries outside the house in the direction of the place through which the water of the mill-race ran.

"Help! I'm drowning! Frasquita! Frasquita!" called a man's voice in the sad accents of despair.

"Can it be Lucas?" thought the Navarrese,

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full of a terror which we have no need to describe.

In the bedroom itself there was a very small door of which Garduña has already spoken; and it opened directly upon the deepest part of the mill-race. Señà Frasquita opened it without hesitation as she could not recognize the voice that was crying for help, and found herself face to face with the Corregidor who at that moment was arising dripping from the extremely swift watercourse. . . .

"God forgive me! God forgive me!" stuttered the infamous old man. "I thought I was drowning!"

"What! It's you? What does this mean? How dare you? What are you doing here at this time of night?" cried the miller's wife with more indignation than terror; but mechanically stepping back.

"Hush! Hush, woman!" stammered the Corregidor, gliding behind her into the room. "I'll tell you all about it. . . . I came near drowning! The water carried me off like a feather! Look, look what it has done to me!"

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"Get out of here!" replied Señá Frasquita with more violence than before. "You can explain nothing to me! I understand it all too well! What do I care if you drown! Did I send for you? Ah! What an outrage! So this is why you ordered them to take away my husband!"

"Listen, woman —"

"I shan't listen! Leave this house at once, Señor Corregidor! Leave it; or I shan't be responsible for your life!"

"What are you saying?"

"What you just heard! My husband isn't in the house, but I am perfectly able to make you respect it. Go back the way you came if you don't want me to throw you into the water again with my own hands!"

"Child, child! Don't shout so loud — I'm not deaf!" exclaimed the old libertine. "I came here for a purpose! I came to liberate Tío Lucas, who was arrested by mistake by a country alcalde. . . . But first of all, I must have you dry these clothes — I am drenched to the skin!"

"I tell you to go away!"

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"Hush, you fool! What can you do? See here; I have brought you your nephew's appointment. . . . Light the lamp and we'll have a chat. . . . In the meantime, while you are drying my clothes, I shall get into this bed —"

"A-ha! So you admit you came for me? So you admit that this is why you had my Lucas arrested? So you brought your appointment and all? By all the Saints of heaven! What did this booby think I was?"

"Frasquita! I am the Corregidor!"

"I don't care if you are the King! What difference does it make to me, eh? I am my husband's wife and the mistress of my household! Do you think I am afraid of corregidors? I can easily go to Madrid, and to the end of the world if need be, to seek justice against an insolent old man who thus drags his authority in the mire! And above all else, tomorrow I shall be able to put on my mantilla and go to see the Señora Corregidora. . . ."

"You won't do anything of the sort!" replied the Corregidor, losing his temper, or changing his tactics. "You won't do anything of the sort;

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because I shall shoot you if I see that you will not listen to reason —"

"Shoot me?" exclaimed Señá Frasquita dully.

"Yes, shoot you — and no harm would come to me if I did. I let it be known casually in the City that I was going out after criminals to-night. . . . So don't be silly — and love me — as I adore you!"

"Shoot me, Señor Corregidor," repeated the Navarrese, throwing her arms back and her body forward, as if to hurl herself upon her adversary.

"I shall do so if you persist; and by doing so I shall be free from your threats and your beauty," replied the Corregidor, fearfully drawing a pair of small pistols.

"Pistols too? And in the other pocket, my nephew's appointment!" said Señá Frasquita, nodding her head vigorously. "Well, Señor, the choice is not a difficult one. Wait a moment, Your Worship; I'm going to light the fire."

And as she spoke, she made her way rapidly to the stairs, which she descended in three leaps.

The Corregidor seized the lamp and followed after her, fearful lest she escape; but he was

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forced to descend more slowly, and consequently, when he reached the kitchen, he encountered the Navarrese on her way back to him.

"So you said that you were going to shoot me?" exclaimed the indomitable woman, stepping back a pace. "Well then; on guard, caballero — it's my turn now!" As she spoke, she raised the formidable blunderbuss which has played such a prominent part in this story to her cheek.

"Stop, wretched woman! What are you going to do?" shouted the Corregidor, frightened to death. "I was joking about the shooting — See here — the pistols aren't loaded. On the other hand; it is the truth about the appointment. Here it is. . . . Take it. . . . I give to you. . . . It's yours . . . for nothing, entirely gratis. . ."

And, trembling, he placed it upon the table.

"That's a good place for it!" responded the Navarrese. "Tomorrow I'll use it to light the fire with when I cook my husband's dinner. I wouldn't even take the hope of heaven from you now; and if my nephew should ever leave Estella, it would only be to shoot the ugly hand for you

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that wrote his name on that indecent paper! That's what I said! Leave my house! Give me air, give me air! And be quick about it! — For the gunpowder is going to my head!"

The Corregidor did not reply to this speech. He had turned livid, almost blue; his eyes were rolling up, and a trembling like that of the tertian fevers shook his whole body. At last his teeth began to chatter and he fell to the ground, seized with a terrifying convulsion.

The fright of the mill-race, the fact that his clothes were still wringing wet, the violent scene in the bedroom, and the fear of the blunderbuss which the Navarrese was aiming at him, had exhausted the strength of the sickly old man.

"I'm dying," he gasped. "Call Garduña! Call Garduña — he's outside — in the ravine — I must not die in this house!"

He could not go on. He closed his eyes, and was as though dead.

"And he'll die just as he says he will!" exclaimed Señá Frasquita. "Well now; if that isn't the worst! What will I do now with this man in my house? What will they say of me if

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he dies? What will Lucas say? — How can I justify myself, when I myself opened the door to him? Oh, no! I mustn't stay here with him. I must look for my husband — I must scandalize the whole world rather than compromise my honour!"

This resolution made, she dropped the blunderbuss, went to the corral, seized the remaining burra, saddled her any old way, opened the large gate of the enclosure, mounted with one leap in spite of her weight, and started for the ravine.

"Garduña! Garduña!" she kept crying as she neared the spot.

"Present!" replied the alguacil at last, as he appeared from behind a hedge. "Is that you, Señá Frasquita?"

"Yes, it's me. Go to the mill and rescue your master; he's dying!"

"What did you say? That's a pretty trick!"

"What you heard, Garduña —"

"And you, my dear? Where are you going at this time of night?"

"I? — Get out of the way, you blockhead! I'm going — to the City after a doctor!" an-

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swered Señá Frasquita, kicking the burra with her heels and Garduña with her toes.

And she took — not the road to the City, as she just said, but to the next village.

Garduña did not notice this last circumstance; but strode off toward the mill, mumbling to himself as he went in this fashion:

"Going for the doctor! The poor thing can't do better! But what a poor sort of a man he is! A nice time to get sick! God gives sugarplums to those who can't chew them!"

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XXII

GARDUÑA OUTDOES HIMSELF

WHEN Garduña reached the mill, the Corregidor was beginning to come to, and was endeavouring to get up from the floor.

Also upon the floor, and at his side, was the lighted lamp that His Worship had brought down from the bedroom.

"Has she gone yet?" were Don Eugenio's first words.

"Who?"

"The devil! — I mean, the miller's wife —"

"Sí Señor — she's gone — but I don't think she was in very good humour."

"*Ay,* Garduña! I'm dying —"

"But what's the matter with you? Good heavens!"

"I fell into the mill-race and got drenched to

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the skin. My bones are dropping apart with cold!"

"Never mind! We'll get rid of that!"

"Garduña! See what you are saying!"

"I'm not saying anything, Señor."

"Well then; get me out of this trouble."

"Right off. . . . Your Honour shall see how quickly I set everything to rights."

As the alguacil said this, he seized the lamp in a jiffy with one hand, and picked up the Corregidor and put him under his arm with the other; climbed to the bedroom; stripped him to the skin; put him in bed; ran to the cellar; gathered an armful of wood; went to the kitchen; made a huge fire; brought down all his master's clothes; hung them over the backs of two or three chairs; lit a lamp; hung it from the shelf; and went back to the bedchamber.

"How are you getting on?" he then asked of Don Eugenio, raising the lamp the better to see his face.

"Admirably! I believe I'm going to perspire! I shall hang you tomorrow, Garduña!"

"Why, Señor?"

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"And you dare ask me? Do you think that after following the plan you made for me I was expecting to get into this bed alone after receiving for the second time the sacrament of baptism? I shall hang you tomorrow!"

"But tell me something, Your Worship — Señà Frasquita?"—

"Señá Frasquita tried to assassinate me. That is all I accomplished with your advice. I tell you I shall hang you tomorrow morning."

"It isn't as bad as that, Señor Corregidor!" replied the alguacil.

"Why do you say that, insolent one? Because you see me prostrated here before you?"

"No, Señor. I say it because Señá Frasquita couldn't have been as inhuman as Your Worship thinks, since she has gone to the City to get a doctor —"

"Great God! Are you sure she went to the City?" cried Don Eugenio more terrified than ever.

"At least, that is what she told me —"

"Run, run, Garduña! Ah! I am lost beyond recall! Do you know why Señá Frasquita is

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going to the City? To tell my wife everything! — To tell her that I am here! Oh, my God, my God! How could I ever have imagined this? I thought she had gone to the village after her husband; and, as I had him under lock and key, her trip didn't trouble me any! But, to go to the City! — Garduña, run, run — you are so nimble — and prevent my ruin! Prevent the terrible miller's wife from entering my house!"

"And Your Worship won't hang me if I succeed?" asked the alguacil ironically.

"On the contrary! I'll give you a pair of shoes in good repair which are too large for me. I'll give you anything you wish!"

"I'm off then. Your Worship may sleep in peace. I'll be back within half an hour, after leaving the Navarrese in jail. It's a good thing I can run faster than a burra!"

When Garduña had said this, he disappeared down the stairs.

It goes without saying that it was during the alguacil's absence that the miller was in the mill and saw things through the keyhole.

Let us, then, leave the Corregidor perspiring

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in a strange bed, and Garduña running toward the City (where Tío Lucas was so soon to follow him in the three-cornered hat and the scarlet cloak), and let us, nimble as well, fly in the direction of the Village in pursuit of the valorous Señá Frasquita.

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XXIII

ONCE MORE THE WILDERNESS AND THE AFORESAID VOICES

THE only adventure that befell the Navarrese on her journey from the mill to the Village was being a bit startled by noticing some one striking a light in the middle of a field.

"Could that be one of the Corregidor's hirelings? Is he going to detain me?" thought the miller's wife.

At this point she heard a bray from the same direction.

"Burras in the fields at this hour of the night!" said Señá Frasquita to herself. "Why, there isn't any orchard or farm house near here. Good gracious, the goblins are flying about as they please tonight! For it can't be my hus-

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band's burra. What would my Lucas be doing stopping in a field in the middle of the night?

"No indeed! It must be a spy!"

The burra which Señá Frasquita rode thought the moment opportune to bray herself.

"Hush, you demon!" said the Navarrese, sticking a farthing pin into its withers.

And, fearing an inconvenient encounter, she too turned her beast from the road and trotted her across country.

Without further mishap she reached the gates of the Village at about eleven o'clock.

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XXIV

A KING IN THOSE DAYS

THE Señor Alcalde was already sleeping off his wine, back to back with his wife (forming thus with her the figure of a *double-headed Austrian eagle,* as our immortal Quevedo puts it), when Toñuelo knocked on the door of his matrimonial bedchamber and announced to Señor Juan López that Señá Frasquita, *she of the mill,* wished to see him.

We need not speak of all the groans and curses that accompanied the awakening and dressing of the country alcalde. Let it therefore suffice for us to remark that the miller's wife saw him coming, stretching himself like a gymnast exercising his muscles, and exclaiming in the midst of an interminable yawn:

"A very good evening to you, Señá Frasquita! What brings you here? Didn't Toñuelo tell you

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to stay at the mill? Is this the way you disobey Authority?"

"I must see my Lucas!" rejoined the Navarrese. "I must see him at once! Tell him that his wife is here!"

"Must! Must! Señora, you forget that you are speaking to the King!"

"Never mind your kings, Señor Juan; I'm in no mood for joking! You know too well what the matter is with me! You know too well why you arrested my husband!"

"I don't know anything, Señà Frasquita. . . . And as for your husband; he has not been arrested, but is sleeping peacefully in this his house, and treated as I know how to treat people. Here, Toñuelo! Go to the straw loft and tell Tío Lucas to get up and come here in a hurry. . . . Come now — tell me what the matter is! Were you afraid of sleeping alone?"

"Don't be indecent, Señor Juan! You know very well that I like neither your jokes nor your truths! Something very simple is the matter with me: and that is that you and the Corregidor have tried to ruin me. But you have made a

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fizzle of it! I am here with nothing to blush for, and the Señor Corregidor is at the mill, dying!"

"The Corregidor dying!" exclaimed his Inferiorship. "Señora, do you know what you are saying?"

"Of couse I do! He fell into the mill-race and almost drowned — or else he's caught cold — or I don't know what — That is the Corregidor's affair! I came here to get my husband, without giving up my right to go to Madrid tomorrow, where I'll tell the King —"

"The very devil!" mumbled Señor Juan López. "Here, Manuela! — Girl! — Go saddle my mule — Señá Frasquita, I'm going to the mill — Heaven help you if you have hurt the Señor Corregidor!"

"Señor Alcalde! Señor Alcalde!" cried Toñuelo at this point, coming in more dead than alive. "Tío Lucas isn't in the straw loft. And his burra isn't in the shed, and the corral gate is open — The bird has flown!"

"What are you saying?" shouted Señor Juan López.

"Holy Virgin! What will happen at my

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house?" cried Señá Frasquita. "Let's run, Señor Alcalde; don't let's lose a second! My husband will kill the Corregidor when he finds him there alone at this time of night."

"Then do you believe that Tío Lucas is at the mill?"

"Of couse I do! Besides — when I was on my way here I passed him without realizing it. He must have been the one who was striking a light in the middle of a field! My heavens! Would one ever think that animals had more sense than humans! For you must know, Señor Juan, that our two burras recognized and greeted each other, while my Lucas and I did neither. Instead, we ran away from each other — each taking the other for a spy!"

"Your Lucas is all right!" replied the alcalde. "Well, let's get started; we shall see later what we shall do to you two. You can't play with me! I am the King! — But not a king like the one we have in Madrid now, or rather, in the Pardo [1]; but like the one we had in Seville whom they called Pedro the Cruel. Here, Manuela!

[1] Pardo: The Royal Country Residence.

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Bring me my staff, and tell your mistress I am going!"

The servant girl (who was certainly a more attractive girl than was pleasing to the alcalde's wife, or than was morally proper) obeyed; and, as Señor Juan López's mule was saddled, Señá Frasquita and he set out for the mill, followed by the indispensable Toñuelo.

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XXV

GARDUÑA'S STAR

LET us precede them, assuming that we have carte blanche to travel faster than any one else.

Garduña, having looked for Señá Frasquita throughout every street in the City, was already back at the mill.

The astute alguacil had stopped at the Official Residence on his way, and had found everything quiet there. The doors, according to the custom when the Authority was out performing his sacred duties, were still open as in the middle of the day. Other alguacils and servants were dozing on the landing of the stairs, awaiting at their ease their master's return; but when they heard Garduña coming, two or three of them stretched themselves and asked him who was their senior and immediate chief:

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"Is the Señor coming?"

"Don't dream of such a thing! — Rest easy. I came to find out if there is anything new at the house."

"Nothing."

"Where is the Señora?"

"Withdrawn to her apartments."

"Has any woman entered these doors recently?"

"Not a soul has been seen here all evening."

"Well, don't let any one in whoever it is or whatever they say. On the contrary! Lay your hands on the first bright morning star who comes to ask after the Señor or Señora, and take him to jail."

"It looks as if you were hunting some pretty important birds tonight!" remarked one of the menials.

"Big game!" added another.

"With a big G!" responded Garduña solemnly. "You may be sure that the matter is a delicate one when the Señor Corregidor and I are making the chase ourselves! Well — until later, my good scallawags; and keep your eyes peeled!"

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"Go you with God, Señor Bastián," they replied, bowing to Garduña.

"My star is eclipsed!" he murmured as he left the Official Residence. "Even the women deceive me! The miller's wife went to the Village after her husband instead of coming to the City. . . . Poor Garduña! What has happened to the keenness of your scent?"

And, discoursing in this fashion, he returned to the mill.

The alguacil had reason to regret the dulness of his scent, because he failed to get wind of a man who at that moment concealed himself behind some scrub-willows a short distance from the ravine, and who exclaimed within his coat, or rather, within his scarlet cloak:

"Hold on, there! Here comes Garduña!—He mustn't see me—"

It was Tío Lucas, dressed as the Corregidor, on his way to the City—repeating now and again his diabolical phrase:

"The Corregidor's wife is pretty too!"

Garduña went by without seeing him, and the

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false Corregidor left his place of concealment and entered the City. . . .

A little while later, as we have already indicated, the alguacil reached the mill.

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XXVI

REACTION

THE Corregidor was still in bed exactly as Tío Lucas had seen him through the key-hole.

"How freely I perspire, Garduña! I have saved myself from an illness!" he cried as soon as the alguacil had entered the room. "What about Señá Frasquita? Did you meet her? Is she with you? Did you speak with my wife?"

"The miller's wife, Señor," replied Garduña in heart-broken accents, "deceived me like a good one — because she didn't go to the City, but to the Village — after her husband. Forgive my stupidity, Your Worship."

"Good! Good!" declared the Madrilene, his eyes sparkling with evil. "Everything is saved then! Before dawn, Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita will be on their way to the prison of the

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Inquisition, tied elbow to elbow, and there they shall rot without having any one to whom they can relate tonight's adventures. Bring me my clothes, Garduña; they must be dry by this time — Bring them to me and dress me! The lover is about to turn into the Corregidor."

Garduña went down to the kitchen for the clothes.

. . . . . .

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XXVII

IN THE KING'S NAME

MEANWHILE, Señá Frasquita, Señor Juan López, and Toñuelo were advancing toward the mill, which they reached a few minutes later.

"I shall go in first!" exclaimed the country alcalde. "I'm not an Authority for nothing! You follow me, Toñuelo; and you, Señá Frasquita, wait at the door until I call you."

Then Señor Juan López entered the grape arbour, where he saw by the light of the moon a rather hunchbacked individual dressed as the miller was accustomed to dress, in waistcoat and breeches of grey cloth, a black sash, blue stockings, a plush Murcian cap, and a short overcoat thrown over his shoulder.

"'Tis he!" shouted the alcalde. "In the King's name! — Surrender, Tío Lucas!"

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The man in the cap attempted to enter the house.

"Surrender!" shouted Toñuelo in his turn; and he pounced upon him, seized him by the neck, applied his knee to the small of his back, and forced him to the ground.

At the same moment another kind of a beast leaped upon Toñuelo, and grasping him by the belt, threw him to the pavement and began to pommel him.

It was Señá Frasquita, who cried:

"Leave my Lucas alone, you fool!"

But at this moment, another person came into sight leading a burra by the halter, thrust himself resolutely between the two and tried to rescue Toñuelo.

It was Garduña; and, mistaking the Village alguacil for Don Eugenio de Zúñiga, he said to the miller's wife:

"Señora, have a little respect for my master!"

Then he threw her across the villager's back.

Thereupon Señá Frasquita, seeing that she was between two fires, gave Garduña such a powerful

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backward kick in the stomach that he fell to the ground with a mouth as big as himself.

So now, there were four persons sprawling upon the ground.

Meanwhile, Señor Juan López was preventing Tío Lucas supposed-to-be from arising by stepping on the small of his back.

"Garduña! Help! In the King's name! I am the Corregidor!" shouted Don Eugenio at last, when he felt that the alcalde's hoof, which was clad in a rough bull-hide shoe, was about to crush him.

"The Corregidor! Why, so it is!" said the astonished Señor Juan López.

"The Corregidor!" echoed the others.

And the four sprawling figures were soon on their feet.

"To the jail with everybody!" exclaimed Don Eugenio de Zúñiga. "To the gallows with them!"

"But Señor—" observed Señor Juan López, falling upon his knees. "Forgive me for having mistaken you! How was I going to recognize you in those ordinary clothes?"

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"Wildman!" replied the Corregidor. "I had to put *something* on! Don't you know that they have stolen mine? Don't you know that a band of robbers led by Tío Lucas —"

"You lie!" shouted the Navarrese.

"Listen to me, Señá Frasquita," said Garduña, calling her to one side. "With the permission of the Señor Corregidor and the company — If you don't fix this thing up, they'll hang us all, beginning with Tío Lucas!"

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired Señá Frasquita.

"Why, Tío Lucas is now wandering about the City dressed as the Corregidor — and God knows whether, in that disguise, he hasn't even reached the bedroom of the Corregidora herself."

The alguacil told her in a few words everything that we already know.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the miller's wife. "So my husband thinks I'm dishonoured! And he has gone to the City to avenge himself! Come — come to the City and clear me in the eyes of my Lucas!"

"Come to the City and stop that man from

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talking to my wife and telling her all the nonsense he has imagined!" said the Corregidor, leaning upon one of the burras. "Give me a hand to mount with, Señor Alcalde."

"Yes indeed, let's go," added Garduña; "and I hope to heaven, Señor Corregidor, that Tío Lucas has contented himself with talking to the Señora!"

"What are you saying, you wretch?" gasped Don Eugenio de Zúñiga. "Do you think that villain is capable —?"

"Of anything!" replied Señá Frasquita.

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XXVIII

AVE MARÍA PURISIMA! HALF PAST TWELVE, AND ALL'S WELL [1]

THUS he whose right it was to do so was crying through the streets of the City, when the miller's wife and the Corregidor, each mounted upon one of the mill burras, Señor Juan López on his mule, and the two alguacils on foot, all reached the door of the Official Residence.

The door was closed.

One might say that everything was closed for the day both to the Governor and to the governed.

"Bad!" thought Garduña.

And he gave several blows upon the knocker.

[1] It is still the custom in some parts of Spain for the *sereno*, or night watchman to call the hours. As he does so he generally prefixes the phrase *Ave María Purísima*.

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A long time elapsed, and no one either opened the door or answered.

Señá Frasquita was paler than wax.

The Corregidor had already consumed all the nails of his ten fingers.

Nobody said a word.

Bang! . . . Bang! . . . Bang! — blows and more blows upon the door of the Official Residence, applied successively by the two alguacils and Señor Juan López. . . . But nothing happened! No one answered! No one opened it! Not even a fly moved!

All they could hear was the sound of the pipes of a fountain in the patio of the house.

And so the minutes passed — each an eternity.

At last, when it was nearly one o'clock, a little window on the second floor was opened and a woman's voice said:

"Who is it?"

"It's the nurse's voice," whispered Garduña.

"I," replied Don Eugenio de Zúñiga. "Open!"

There was a moment of silence.

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"And who are you?" the nurse then questioned.

"Can't you hear me? I am the master!—The Corregidor!"—

There was another pause.

"Go you with God!" replied the good woman. "My master came in an hour ago and went right to bed. You people had better go to bed too, and sleep off the wine you must have in you!"

The window closed with a bang.

Señá Frasquita hid her face in her hands.

"Nurse!" thundered the Corregidor, beside himself. "Can't you hear me tell you to open the door? Can't you hear who I am? Do you want me to hang you too?"

The window was reopened.

"But let's see," said the woman. "Who are you to shout so?"

"I am the Corregidor!"

"Tut, tut! Didn't I just tell you that the Corregidor came in before twelve o'clock, and that I saw him with my own eyes shut himself up in the Señora's apartments? Are you try-

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ing to make fun of me? Just you wait — you'll see what will happen to you!"

Just then the door opened suddenly, and a cloud of servants and bailiffs, each provided with a cudgel, fell upon those outside, exclaiming furiously:

"Let's see! Where is the fellow who says he is the Corregidor? Where is the fool? Where is the drunkard?"

And a very devil of a row began in the dark, in which no one could make himself understood, and in which blow after blow was rained upon the Corregidor, Garduña, Señor Juan López, and Toñuelo.

It was the second beating that his evening's adventure had cost Don Eugenio — besides the ducking he had gotten in the mill-race.

Señá Frasquita, at one side of the affray, was crying for the first time in her life. . . .

"Lucas! Lucas!" she sobbed. "To think that you could doubt me! That you could hold another woman in your arms! Ah! Our misfortune is beyond remedy!"

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XXIX

POST NUBILA . . . DIANA

"WHAT scandal is this?" said a voice at last — tranquil, majestic, and of a delightful timbre, which resounded above the tumult.

They all lifted their heads and saw a woman dressed in black leaning over the main balcony of the edifice.

"The Señora!" cried the servants, suspending the tattoo of sticks.

"My wife!" gasped Don Eugenio.

"Let those country bumpkins in . . . The Señor Corregidor gives his permission," continued the Corregidor's wife.

The servants gave way, and de Zúñiga and his companions passed through the door and made their way up the stairs.

No criminal ever ascended the gallows with

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such a faltering step or such an altered mien as that with which the Corregidor climbed the stairs in his own house. Nevertheless, with noble selfishness he was already thinking rather of his own dishonour than of the misfortunes he had brought upon others,— not to speak of further ridiculous aspects of the situation in which he found himself. . . .

"Above all else," he was thinking, "I am a de Zúñiga and a Ponce de León! . . . Woe unto them who have forgotten the fact! Woe unto my wife if she has stained my name!"

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XXX

A LADY OF DISTINCTION

THE Corregidora received her husband and the rustic committee in the main salon of the Official Residence.

She was standing alone, with her eyes riveted upon the door.

She was a very high-born woman, still rather young, and of a placid and severe beauty that was more suitable to the Christian brush than to the Pagan chisel. She was dressed with as much dignity and seriousness as the taste of that period allowed. Her dress, with its narrow skirt and full, short sleeves was of black bombazine: a yellowish-white lace kerchief veiled her admirable shoulders, and extremely long mitts of black tulle covered the greater part of her alabastrine arms. She fanned herself with an enormous fan brought from the Philippine Islands, and she held in her

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hand a lace handkerchief whose four corners hung with a symmetrical regularity comparable only to her attitude and lesser gestures.

This beautiful woman was something of a queen, and a good deal of an abbess; and therefore instilled veneration and fear into whomsoever looked upon her. For the rest, the elegance of her dress at such a time, the gravity of her bearing, and the many lights that illuminated the salon, showed that the Corregidor's wife had taken pains to give to the scene a theatrical solemnity and a ceremonious tinge that should be a contrast to the villainous and coarse adventure of her husband.

Finally we must inform you that the lady's name was Doña Mercedes Carillo de Albornoz y Espinosa de los Monteros, and that she was a daughter, a granddaughter, a great-granddaughter, a great-great-granddaughter, and even a twentieth granddaughter of the City — being a descendant of its illustrious conquerors. Her family, for reasons of mundane vanity, had induced her to marry the old and wealthy Corregidor; and she, who otherwise would have been

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a nun, since her natural inclination was toward the cloister, consented to make the grievous sacrifice.

At that time she already had two offshoots from the dashing Madrilene, and it was whispered that once more there were "Moors in the offing"—

But let us return to our story.

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XXXI

THE LAW OF REPRISALS

"MERCEDES!" exclaimed the Corregidor as he appeared before his wife. "I must know at once —"

"Hello, Tío Lucas! You here?" interrupted the Corregidora. "Is there anything wrong at the mill?"

"Señora, I am in no mood for jests!" rejoined the furious Corregidor. "Before entering upon any explanation in my behalf, I must know what has become of my honour —"

"That does not concern me! Have you perhaps left it on deposit with me?"

"Sí Señora — with you!" replied Don Eugenio. "Women are the depositories of their husbands' honour!"

"Well then, my dear Tío Lucas, ask your wife about it — She is at this moment listening to us."

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Señá Frasquita, who had remained in the doorway, gave vent to a sort of bellow.

"Come in, Señora, and sit down," continued the Corregidora, turning to the miller's wife with superb dignity.

She herself crossed to the sofa.

The generous Navarrese was able to understand from that moment all the greatness of the wronged woman's attitude (and the Corregidora was perhaps doubly wronged.) So that is why, rising to an equal height, she forthwith dominated her own natural impulses and kept a decorous silence. This is aside from the fact that Señá Frasquita, sure of her own innocence and power, was in no hurry to defend herself. She had, of course, much to complain of; but not exactly to the Corregidora. The one with whom she desired to adjust accounts was Tío Lucas — and Tío Lucas was not there!

"Señá Frasquita," repeated the noble lady, when she saw that the miller's wife had not moved from her place; "I told you that you might enter and seat yourself."

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This second invitation was given in a more affectionate and sympathetic tone of voice than the first. . . . One might say that the Corregidora, when she saw the calm bearing and statuesque beauty of the other woman, had also instinctively divined that she was not about to settle accounts with a vulgar and despicable person, but rather with another unfortunate like herself. Unfortunate indeed — if only for having known the Corregidor!

Thereupon those two women who considered themselves rivals exchanged glances of peace and indulgence, and in great surprise, became aware that they warmed to each other like long lost sisters.

In just this way do the chaste snows of the lofty mountain tops perceive and greet each other.

Enjoying these emotions, the miller's wife majestically entered the salon and sat upon the edge of a chair.

When she stopped at the mill, foreseeing that she would have to make some important calls in

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the City, she had tidied herself up a bit and had put on a black flannel shawl with a fringe of great plush balls that became her divinely.

She looked every inch a lady.

As for the Corregidor, needless to say he was silent during this episode. Señá Frasquita's bellow and her appearance upon the scene did nothing less than astound him. That woman was already causing him more terror than his own wife!

"Come now, Tío Lucas," continued Doña Mercedes, turning to her husband. "Here is your Señá Frasquita. . . . You may now repeat your demands! You may now ask *her* about your honour!"

"Mercedes, for the love of heaven!" shouted the Corregidor. "You don't realize what I am capable of! Once more I entreat you to stop jesting and to tell me what happened here during my absence! Where is that man?"

"Who? My husband? . . . My husband is getting up, and will be here before long."

"Getting up!" ejaculated Don Eugenio.

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"Are you surprised? Why, where would you want an honourable man to be at this time of night if not in his house, in his bed, and sleeping with his legitimate consort according to God's word?"

"Mercedes! Look what you are saying! Remember that people are listening to us! Remember that I am the Corregidor!"

"Don't scream at me so, Tío Lucas, or I shall have the alguacils throw you into jail!" replied the Corregidora, rising to her feet.

"Me in jail? Me! The Corregidor of the City!"

"The Corregidor of the City, the representative of Justice, the plenipotentiary of the King," rejoined the great lady with a severity and an energy that drowned the voice of the false miller, "reached his house at the proper hour, to rest after the noble tasks of his office, that he might continue tomorrow to protect the honour and lives of the citizens, the sanctity of their homes, and the modesty of their women; in this way preventing any one from entering a strange woman's bedroom disguised as a corregidor or as

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anything else; from surprising her virtue in her peaceful repose; from abusing her chaste sleep —"

"Mercedes! What are you saying?" whistled the Corregidor between his gums and lips. "If that is what really happened in this house, I say that you are a scoundrel, a perfidious and licentious woman!"

"To whom is this man speaking?" ejaculated the Corregidora disdainfully, as she looked at each bystander in turn. "Who is this madman? Who is this inebriate? I can no longer even believe that he is an honest miller like Tío Lucas — in spite of the fact that he wears his rustic clothes. Believe me, Señor Juan López," she continued, turning to the terrified country alcalde; "my husband, the Corregidor of the City, reached this his house two hours ago, with his three-cornered hat, his scarlet cloak, his knightly sword, and his staff of office. The servants and alguacils who are now listening to me, got up and greeted him as he came through the door; mounted the stairs, and went into the reception room. All the doors were immediately closed,

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and since then no one has entered my house until you came. Isn't that true? Answer me —"

"It's true! Very true!" answered the nurse, the domestics, and the bailiffs; all of whom were present at the singular scene grouped about the door of the salon.

"Everybody leave this room!" shouted Don Eugenio, foaming with rage. "Garduña! Garduña! Come and seize these vile creatures who are so lacking in respect for me! To the jail with them all! To the gallows with them!"

Garduña was nowhere in evidence.

"Moreover, Señor," continued Doña Mercedes, changing her tone and deigning to look at her husband and to treat him as such, fearful lest the jest might reach irremediable extremes. "Let us suppose that you *are* my husband. . . . Let us suppose that you *are* Don Eugenio de Zúñiga y Ponce de León —"

"I am!"

"Let us suppose, moreover, that I was somewhat to blame for having mistaken the man who entered my bedroom dressed as the Corregidor for you —"

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"Wretches!" shouted the old man, putting his hand to his sword, but encountering only space — or rather, the Murcian miller's sash.

The Navarrese covered her face with a corner of her shawl to hide the flames of her jealousy.

"Let us suppose anything you wish," continued Doña Mercedes with an inexplicable impassibility. "But tell me now, my dear sir: Would you have any right to complain? Could you accuse me as a public prosecutor? Could you sentence me as a judge? Did you just come from a sermon? Did you just come from confession? Did you just come from mass? Or where *did* you come from in those clothes? Where did you come from with that woman? Where have you spent half the night?"

"With your permission —" exclaimed Señá Frasquita, jumping to her feet as if pushed by a spring, and interposing herself arrogantly between the Corregidora and her husband.

The latter, who was about to speak, stopped with his mouth open when he saw that the Navarrese had entered the lists.

But Doña Mercedes forestalled her and said:

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"Señora, please do not fatigue yourself by asking explanations of me. I am by no means asking them of you! Here comes some one who has the right to ask them of you. . . . You must reckon with him!"

And just then the door of an anteroom opened, and Tío Lucas appeared, dressed as a corregidor from head to foot, with the staff, the gloves, and the sword, exactly as if he were presenting himself before the Town Council.

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XXXII

FAITH MOVETH MOUNTAINS

"A VERY good evening to you all," said the recent arrival, removing his three-cornered hat, and speaking through tightly drawn lips as was Don Eugenio de Zúñiga's habit.

Then he walked into the room, swaying in all directions, and stooped to kiss the Corregidora's hand.

Everybody was dumbfounded. The likeness of Tío Lucas to the real Corregidor was marvelous.

So much so, that the servants, and even Señor Juan López himself could not contain their laughter.

When Don Eugenio heard that added insult, he threw himself upon Tío Lucas like a basilisk.

But Señá Frasquita interfered, pushing the

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Corregidor aside with her hereinbefore-described arm; and His Worship, to avoid another tumble and the derision that would be sure to follow, allowed himself to be thrust aside without saying a word. One could see that that woman was born to dominate the poor old man.

Tío Lucas turned paler than death when he saw his wife approach him; but he was soon master of himself, and, with a smile so horrible that he was forced to press his hand to his heart to keep it from breaking, he said, still imitating the Corregidor:

"God keep you, Frasquita! Have you sent your nephew his appointment yet?"

You should have seen the Navarrese then! She threw back her shawl, lifted her head with the majesty of a lioness, and fastening her two dagger-like eyes upon the false Corregidor, she said with her face close to his:

"I despise you, Lucas!!"

Every one thought she had spit at him.

Such a gesture, such a bearing, and such a tone of voice accentuated the phrase!

The miller's face was transfigured when he

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heard his wife's voice. A sort of inspiration like that of religious faith had penetrated his soul, inundating it with light and joy. . . . So, forgetting for a moment all he had seen and *thought* he had seen in the mill, he exclaimed with tears in his eyes and sincerity upon his lips:

"Then you *are* my Frasquita?"

"No!" replied the Navarrese, beside herself. "I am not your Frasquita! I am — ask your tonight's doings, and they will tell you what you have done to the heart that loved you so!"

And like a mountain of ice that suddenly melts into fluid, she burst into tears.

Unable to restrain herself, the Corregidora went up to her and with the utmost tenderness put her arms about her.

Then Señá Frasquita scarcely realizing what she was doing began to kiss her, and said to her between her sobs, like a child that seeks its mother's protection:

"Señora, Señora! How unhappy I am!"

"Not as much as you think you are!" the Corregidora answered, also weeping copiously.

"I'm the unhappy one!" groaned Tío Lucas at

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the same time; fighting his tears with his fists as if ashamed of spilling them.

"Well, what about me?" interjected Don Eugenio at last, feeling somewhat softened by the contagious weeping of the others; or else hoping to save himself also by the humid way — I mean, by the way of tears. "Ah, I am a scoundrel! A monster! An utter rake, who has got his just deserts!"

And he began to bellow sadly, throwing his arms about the belly of Señor Juan López.

The latter, as well as the servants, began to weep in like manner; and everything seemed to have been settled, though no one had explained a thing.

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XXXIII

WELL, WHAT ABOUT YOU?

TÍO LUCAS was the first to come to the surface in that sea of tears.

He was beginning to remember once more what he had seen through the keyhole.

"Señores, let us get down to business!" he said suddenly.

"There is no business worth getting down to, Tío Lucas," exclaimed the Corregidora. "Your wife is a saint!"

"I know — but —!"

"There is no but about it! Let her talk, and you'll see how well she exculpates herself. The minute I saw her my heart told me that she was a saint; in spite of everything you told me" . . .

"Very well; let her speak!" said Tío Lucas.

"I won't speak!" replied the miller's wife. "You are the one to do the talking! For the truth is, you —"

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And Señá Frasquita said no more; the invincible respect she had for the Corregidora prevented her.

"Well, what about you?" rejoined Tío Lucas, again losing his faith in her.

"This affair does not concern her at present," shouted the Corregidor, also returning to his jealousy. "It concerns you and this lady! Ah, Merceditas! Who would have said that you —?"

"Well, what about you?" replied the Corregidora, halving him with a look.

And for several moments the couples repeated the same phrases a hundred times:

"What about you?"

"Well, what about you?"

"You are the one!"

"No, you!"

"But, how could you?" . . .

Etc., etc., etc.

The thing would have been interminable if the Corregidora, once more clothing herself with dignity, had not finally said to Don Eugenio:

"See here; you be still for a while! We shall

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ventilate our own affair later. The important thing now is to restore peace to Tío Lucas' heart: a very easy matter in my judgment; for I can see Señor Juan López and Toñuelo, who will jump at the chance of exculpating Señá Frasquita."

"I don't need any men to clear me!" the latter replied. "I have two witnesses of better standing, of whom it will not be said that I tempted or bribed them."

"Where are they?" asked the miller.

"Downstairs at the door."

"Well, tell them to come up."

"The poor dears can't come up."

"Ah! They are two women! That's a fine kind of testimony for you!"

"They are not two women, either: — just two females."

"Worse and more of it! Two girls! Kindly tell me their names."

"One is called *Piñona,* and the other *Liviana.*"

"Our two burras! Frasquita: are you making fun of me?"

"No; I am speaking very seriously. I can prove to you by the testimony of our burras that

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I was not at the mill when you saw the Señor Corregidor there."

"For heaven's sake explain yourself!"

"Listen, Lucas — and die of shame for ever having doubted my honour! Tonight when you were on the way from the Village to our house, I was going from our house to the Village; and, consequently, we passed each other on the road. But you were travelling outside of it, or rather, you had stopped to strike a light in the middle of a field."

"That's true — I did stop! Go on!"

"Then your burra brayed —"

"Just so! Ah, how happy I am! Speak, speak; every word you say gives me back a year of life!"

"And another bray answered from the road."

"Oh! Yes — yes! Bless you! I can hear it now!"

"It was Liviana and Piñona who had recognized each other and greeted each other like two good friends, while we did neither —"

"Say no more! — Say no more!"

"We not only did not recognize each other,"

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continued Señá Frasquita, "but we were afraid of each other, and fled in different directions. . . . So now you see that I wasn't in the mill! Now, if you want to know why you found the Señor Corregidor in our bed, feel of the clothes you have on and you will find that they are still damp. They will tell you better than I. His Worship fell into the mill-race, and Graduña undressed him and put him to bed there! If you want to know why I opened the door — it was because I thought it was you who were drowning and calling to me. And lastly, if you want to know about that appointment — But that is all I have to say for the present. When we are alone, I'll tell you all about that and other particulars — which I ought not to mention before the Señora."

"Everything Señá Frasquita says is the pure truth!" cried Señor Juan Lopez, desirous of ingratiating himself with Doña Mercedes, seeing that she was the ruler of the Official Residence.

"Everything! Everything!" added Toñuelo, following his master's example.

"So far, everything!" agreed the Corregidor,

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very pleased that the explanations of the Navarrese had gone no further.

"Then you are innocent!" exclaimed Tío Lucas, surrendering to the evidence. "My Frasquita, my dear Frasquita! Forgive my injustice, and let me embrace you!"

"That is flour from another sack," replied the miller's wife, slipping aside. "Before you embrace me, I must hear your explanations."

"I shall explain for him and for me," said Doña Mercedes.

"I've been waiting an hour for it!" offered the Corregidor, attempting to stand erect.

"But I shall not do so," continued the Corregidora, turning her back disdainfully upon her husband, "until these gentlemen have changed clothes — and even then, only to the one who deserves to hear it."

"Come, let us change," said the Murcian to Don Eugenio, very glad that he had not assassinated him, but still looking upon him with a hate that was truly Moorish. "Your Worship's clothes are choking me! I have been most unhappy while I have had them on!"

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"Because you do not understand them!" responded the Corregidor. "On the other hand, I am anxious to put them on in order to hang you and everybody else if my wife's explanations do not satisfy me!"

The Corregidora, when she heard these words, calmed the assembly with a gentle smile — peculiar to those hard-working angels whose mission it is to watch over men.

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XXXIV

THE CORREGIDOR'S WIFE IS PRETTY TOO!

WHEN the Corregidor and Tío Lucas had departed from the salon, the Corregidora again sat down upon the sofa. She drew Señá Frasquita to her side, and turning to the domestics and bailiffs who were obstructing the doorway, said to them with kindly simplicity:

"Now, my lads! Tell this excellent woman all the evil you know of me."

The fourth estate advanced, and ten voices attempted to speak at once; but the nurse, being the person who had the highest standing in the house, imposed silence upon the rest and spoke as follows:

"You must know, Señá Frasquita, that the Señora and I were taking care of the children

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this evening, waiting for the master to return, and counting the third Rosary to pass the time (for the reason brought by Garduña was that the Señor Corregidor was out after some very terrible criminals, and we couldn't go to bed until we saw him safely home), when we heard somebody in the next room, which is where my master and mistress sleep. We took the light, dead with fear, and went to see who it was that was walking about in the bedroom; when, Holy Virgin! as we entered, we saw a man dressed like the Señor, but who wasn't he (because he was your husband!), trying to hide himself under the bed. 'Thieves!' we began to shout wildly; and a minute later the room was full of people, and the alguacils were dragging the false Corregidor from his hiding place. The Señora, who like everybody else, had recognized Tío Lucas, when she saw him in that costume, feared that he had killed the master, and began to wail loud enough to break the stones.— 'To jail with him! To jail with him!' the rest of us were shouting meanwhile. 'Thief! Murderer!' were the best words Tío Lucas heard; and there he was propped

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up against the wall like a dead man without saying a word. But when he saw that they were going to take him to prison, he said — what I am going to repeat, though it would be really better to keep still about it: 'Señora, I am neither a thief nor a murderer: the thief and murderer — of my honour, is in my house in bed with my wife.'"

"Poor Lucas!" sighed Señá Frasquita.

"Poor me!" murmured the Corregidora calmly.

"That's what we all said —'Poor Tío Lucas, and poor Señora!' Because — the truth is, Señá Frasquita, we already had an idea that the Señor had his eyes on you, and although nobody imagined that you —"

"Nurse!" exclaimed the Corregidora severely, "Don't go on like that!"

"I'll go on differently," said an alguacil, taking advantage of the juncture to possess himself of the floor. "Tío Lucas (who fooled us wonderfully with his clothes and the way he walked when he came in — so much so that we all took him for the Señor Corregidor) did not come with

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very good intentions, as you might say, and if the Señora Corregidora had not been up — you can imagine what might have happened —"

"Come! You keep still too!" interrupted the cook. "You're only talking nonsense! Why yes, Señá Frasquita: in order to explain his presence in my mistress' bedroom, Tío Lucas had to confess his intentions. Of course the Señora could not contain herself when she heard him, but handed him such a blow on the mouth that half his words stayed in his body! I myself filled him with insults and abuse, and tried to scratch his eyes out. . . . Because you know, Señá Frasquita, even if he is your husband, this business of coming here with evil intentions —"

"You are a chatter box!" shouted the porter, placing himself in front of the oratrix. "What more could you want? Just you listen to me, Señá Frasquita and we'll come to the point. The Señora did and said exactly what she should; but after a little, when her anger calmed down, she took pity on Tío Lucas, and thought over the Corregidor's evil doings. Then she said something like this: 'As outrageous as your thought

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was, Tío Lucas, and though I shall never be able to forgive such insolence, it is necessary that your wife and my husband believe for some hours that they have been caught in their own net, and that you, with the help of that disguise, have returned them insult for insult. We can take no better vengeance upon them than this deception, which will be so easy to dispel when it is convenient for us to do so!' Having adopted such a clever resolution, the Señora and Tío Lucas instructed us all in what we were to do and say when His Worship returned; and I certainly gave Sebastián Garduña such a blow on the rump with my stick, that I don't think he will ever forget the night of St. Simon and St. Judas!"

When the porter had ceased talking, the Corregidora and the miller's wife whispered into each other's ears for a long time; embracing and kissing each other every minute, and, at times, even unable to restrain their laughter.

It is too bad that one could not hear what they said! . . . But the reader can imagine it without any great effort; and if the reader cannot — his wife can!

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XXXV

AN IMPERIAL DECREE

AT that moment, the Corregidor and Tío Lucas returned to the salon, each dressed in his own clothes.

"Now it's my turn!" the distinguished Don Eugenio de Zúñiga remarked as he entered.

And, after striking the floor with his staff a couple of times, as though to recover his strength (like an official Antaeus who did not feel strong until his bamboo cane touched the earth), he said to the Corregidora with indescribable emphasis and coolness:

"Merceditas — I am awaiting your explanations!"

Meanwhile, the miller's wife had arisen and given to Tío Lucas a peace-pinch that made him see stars; at the same time gazing at him with appeased and bewitching eyes.

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The Corregidor, who observed that pantomime, stood stock still, unable to explain such an incomprehensible reconciliation.

Then he turned to his wife and said sourly:

"Señora! Everybody understands each other but us! Deliver me from my doubts — I demand it of you as your husband and as the Corregidor!"

"Oh, must you be going?" exclaimed Doña Mercedes, approaching Señá Frasquita, and paying no attention to Don Eugenio. "Well, don't worry; this scandal will have no consequences. Rosa! Bring a light for these people; they say they are going. Go you with God, Tío Lucas."

"Oh, no!" shouted de Zúñiga, obstructing their passage. "Tío Lucas is not going! Tío Lucas will remain under arrest until I know the whole truth! Here, alguacils! In the name of the King!"—

Not a single bailiff obeyed Don Eugenio. They all looked at the Corregidora.

"Here, my man! Let them pass!" she continued, almost walking over her husband, and dismissing every one with the utmost finesse: that

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is to say, with her head to one side, her dress caught up by the tips of her fingers, and bowing gracefully until she had completed the curtsy then in favour, which was called *the peacock's tail.*

"But I — but you — but we — but they"—the old man mumbled on, pulling his wife by the skirt and disturbing the curtsies she had begun so well.

Useless effort! No one paid the slightest attention to His Worship!

When all had departed, and the discordant conjugal pair were alone in the salon, the Corregidora at last deigned to say to her spouse, in accents that a Czarina of all the Russias might have employed when thundering at a fallen minister the order of perpetual exile to Siberia:

"If you live for a thousand years, you will never know what happened in my bedroom tonight . . . If you had been there, as you should, you would have had no necessity of asking any one. As far as I am concerned, there is and never shall be any reason for satisfying you; I despise you so much, that if you weren't the father of my children, I would throw you forth-

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with from that window, as I throw you forever from my bedroom. So, sir, good night."

When she had spoken these words, which Don Eugenio listened to without flickering an eyelash (as he dared say nothing when he was alone with his wife), the Corregidora went into the anteroom, and from the anteroom passed into the bedroom, shutting the door behind her. The poor man stayed behind in the middle of the salon, murmuring between his gums (for he had no teeth), with a cynicism that will never be matched:

"Well, I didn't expect to get out of it so easily! — Garduña will find another one for me!"

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XXXVI

CONCLUSION, MORAL, AND EPILOGUE

THE birds were chirping their greeting to the dawn when Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita set out from the City in the direction of their mill.

Husband and wife went on foot, while ahead of them, hitched together, walked the two burras.

"You must go to confession Sunday," the miller's wife was saying to her husband. "You must cleanse yourself of all last night's evil thoughts and criminal intentions."

"That's a good idea!" answered the miller. "But you must do me a favour too: and that is to give our bedclothes to the poor and replace them with new ones. I refuse to sleep where that poisonous beast has perspired!"

"Don't speak of him, Lucas!" replied Señá

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Frasquita. "Let's talk about something else. I'd like to ask another favour of you."

"Ask away!"

"Next summer you must take me to the baths at Solán de Cabras."

"What for?"

"To see if we can't have children."

"Fine idea! I'll take you, if God gives us life."

And with this they reached the mill, just as the sun, which was still below the horizon, was gilding the tops of the mountains.

. . . . . .

That afternoon, much to the surprise of the miller and his wife, who did not expect any more calls from high personages after such a scandal as that of the preceding night, more of the aristocracy than ever assembled at the mill. The venerable Prelate, many canons, the lawyer, two priors, and various other persons (whom, as it turned out afterward, His Reverend Lordship had summoned to meet there) nearly filled the little paved courtyard under the grape arbour.

Only the Corregidor was missing.

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When all the coterie had gathered, the Señor Bishop took the floor and said that, just because certain things had occurred in that house, his canons and he would continue to come there as they had in the past; in order that neither the honest miller and his wife, nor other persons there present should participate in public censure, which was only merited by him who had profaned by his base conduct a gathering so temperate in its behaviour and so proper. He paternally exhorted Señá Frasquita to be less provocative and tempting in the future as to her remarks and bearing, and to try to keep her arms more covered, and to have her waist cut a bit higher. He advised Tío Lucas to acquire more disinterestedness, greater circumspection, and less forwardness in dealing with his superiors; and he ended by blessing everybody and saying that as he was not fasting on that day, he would take great pleasure in eating a couple of bunches of grapes.

. . . . . .

These delicious gatherings continued for nearly three years until, contrary to the expectation of

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everybody, Napoleon's armies entered Spain, and the War of Independence broke out.

The Señor Bishop, the Magistral, and the Penitentiary died in the year '08; and the lawyer and the other members of the coterie in '09, '10, '11, and '12, because they were unable to bear the sight of the Frenchmen, the Poles, and other scum who invaded their country; and who smoked pipes in the presbyteries of the churches while mass was being said for the troops!

The Corregidor, who never went back to the mill, was removed from office by a French marshal, and died in the Court Prison because he had positively refused (may it be said in his honour) to compromise for a single instant with foreign rule.

Doña Mercedes did not remarry, but brought up her children perfectly, retiring in her old age to a convent where she ended her days in saintly reputation.

Garduña became thoroughly gallicized.

Señor Juan López became a guerrilla, commanded a band and died, as did his alguacil, in

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the famous battle of Baza, after having slain many Frenchmen.

Finally: Tío Lucas and Señá Frasquita (although they never had any children, in spite of having gone to Solán de Cabras, and of having made many vows and said many prayers) continued to love each other in their own way until they reached a very advanced age. They saw Absolutism disappear in 1812 and 1820, to reappear in 1814 and 1823; until at last the Constitutional system became really established at the death of the Absolute King; and they passed to a better life (just as the *Seven Years Civil War* broke out),— nor could the top-hats that everybody was already beginning to wear make them forget the days that were symbolized by the three-cornered hat.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

FEW Spaniards, even taking into consideration the least learned and literate, will fail to recognize the little popular story that serves as a foundation for the present short work.

An ignorant goatherd who had never left the confines of the remote hamlet where he was born, was the first person we heard relate it. He was one of those rustics, absolutely illiterate, but naturally clever and witty, who take such a prominent part in our national literature under the name of *pícaros* (rogues). Whenever there was a holiday in the little hamlet, either on account of a wedding, or a baptism, or a solemn visit from the proprietors, it was up to him to organize pranks and pantomimes, to perform all sorts of clownish tricks, and to recite ballads and tell stories; — and it was upon just such an occasion (nearly a whole lifetime ago — that is, more than

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thirty-five years ago), that he was kind enough to dazzle and enchant our innocence (relative) one night with the story in verse of *The Corregidor and the Miller's Wife,*[1] or, if you will, *The Miller and the Corregidor's Wife,* which we now offer to the public under the more transcendental and philosophical title (since the gravity of these times requires it thus) of *The Three-Cornered Hat.*

I remember perfectly that when the goatherd was entertaining us so nicely, the young unmarried women there assembled turned very red; from which their mothers concluded that the story was somewhat raw — and thereupon started to give the goatherd a good raking over the coals. But poor Repela (as the goatherd was called) was nothing daunted, and replied that there was no reason for getting so upset about it, as there was nothing in his story that even nuns and four-year-old girls did not know . . .

"And if you don't think so," said he, "just let's see exactly what we learn from the story of

[1] *Corregidor:* A magistrate-mayor of small Spanish towns, who derived his power direct from the king.

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The Corregidor and the Miller's Wife: That married couples sleep together, and that no husband likes to have another man sleep with his wife! It strikes me that that information —!"

"Well, true enough!" responded the mothers as they listened to their daughters' laughter.

"The proof that Tío Repela is right," the groom's father observed at this point, "lies in the fact that everybody here present, big and little, is aware that just as soon as the dance is over tonight, Juanete and Manolilla are going to inaugurate the beautiful matrimonial bed which Tía Gabriela has just shown to our daughters that they might admire the embroidery on the pillows . . ."

"There are other proofs!" claimed the bride's grandfather. "Even in the Book of Wisdom, and in the very Sermons themselves, they mention all these natural things to children when they inform them of the long sterility of Our Lady St. Anne, the virtue of the chaste Joseph, the stratagem of Judith, and many other miracles that I don't remember just now.— Therefore, Señores —"

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"Go on, Tío Repela!" exclaimed the girls courageously. "Do tell us your story again; it's awfully funny!"

"And even very decent!" continued the grandfather. "Because nobody is either advised or taught to be wicked in it; nor is he who *is* wicked allowed to go unpunished . . ."

"Go on! Tell it again!" the mothers of families at last said consistorially.

Tío Repela again recited the ballad, and, its text examined by all in the light of that ingenuous critique, they found that there was no *but* connected with it — which is equivalent to saying that they conceded him the necessary licenses.

. . . . . .

With the passage of years, we have heard many and diverse versions of that same story of *The Miller and the Corregidor's Wife* — always from the lips of the *graciosos* (clowns) of the farms and hamlets of the same species as the now defunct Repela. Then, too, we have read it in print in different *Romances de ciego,*[1] and even in the

[1] Ballads and songs printed on single sheets of paper.

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famous *Collection of Ballads* by the unforgetable Don Agustín Durán.

The basis of the matter is always the same: tragi-comic, waggish, and terribly epigrammatic like all those dramatic lessons with a moral of which our people are so enamoured; but the form, the incidental mechanism, the chance happenings, differ very much indeed from those in our goatherd's tale — so much so, that he would not have been able to recite any of the said versions in his hamlet — not even the printed ones — without the decorous maidens first stopping up their ears, and without exposing himself to the danger of having his eyes scratched out by their mothers. To such an extent have the coarse rustics of other provinces overdone and perverted the traditional event which became so delicious and discreet and beautiful in the version of the classic Repela!

A long time ago, then, we conceived the idea of re-establishing the truth of the matter, of returning to the strange story in question its pristine character, which we have never doubted was that wherein the decorum was best preserved. And how can we doubt it? Tales of this kind, as they

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pass from hand to hand among the common people, never change their character by becoming prettier, more delicate, and more decent, but rather by becoming disfigured and tarnished by the contact with coarseness and vulgarity.

Such is the history of the present book . . . So then let us set to work — I mean, let us commence the narrative of *The Corregidor and the Miller's Wife,* not without expecting of your healthy common sense (oh respectable public) that "after having read it and crossed yourselves more times than if you had caught sight of the devil (as Estebanillo Gonzales said at the beginning of *his* story), you will hold it deserving and worth the telling."

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